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Isak Dinesen

ALAN FRIEDMAN:
The Stream of Conscience as a Form in Fiction

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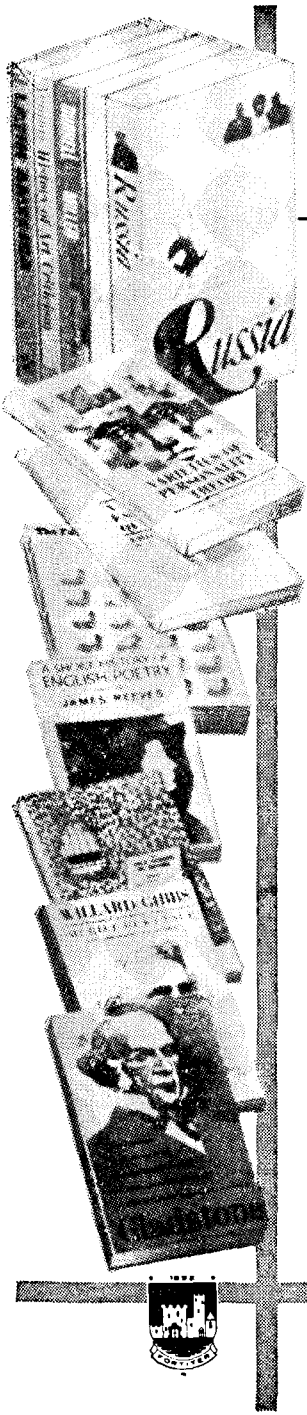

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HOWARD GREEN, who teaches English at Vassar College, is currently at work on a book about the autobiographical element in modern literature.

CHARLES TOMLINSON was recently awarded the Inez Boulton Prize by *Poetry* magazine. Oxford University Press has brought out a paperback selection of his work.

ALAN FRIEDMAN teaches at the University of California, Berkeley, and

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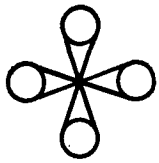

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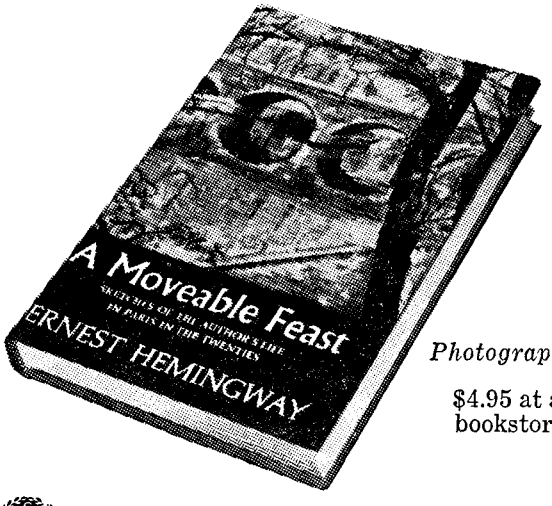

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PATRICK CRUTTWELL

Shakespeare: the Anniversary Year in Retrospect

I

IT ALL BEGAN WITH DAVID GARRICK and the Shakespeare Jubilee which he organised and led at Stratford-upon-Avon in 1765. He led it, in the teeth of appalling difficulties and the bitter hostility of the British climate, to at least a modified success and—in the end—to rich rewards of good profits and better publicity for David Garrick. The story is told by Christian Deelman in a most amusing and erudite book[1] which holds the balance nicely between treating the whole thing as nothing but a farce and being ponderously "significant" about it. There is no doubt that it *was* a farce—no one with a taste for low comedy will fail to enjoy the adventures of Boswell at the Jubilee or the commercial enterprise of the man who bought up "Shakespeare's mulberry-tree" and carved therefrom enough wooden objects to have constituted a sizeable forest—but there is no doubt also of the significance. For it all began with the Jubilee.

But just *what* began? This was no rescuing of greatness from obscurity. It was not theatrical production of Shakespeare that began from the Jubilee, nor praise of him, nor critical comment on his work. All these had begun when he was still alive, and all had continued, unbroken, ever since. What began was the swelling of these to such a volume and pitch as changed their nature—so that since then Shakespearean criticism has never been quite the same as other criticism because Shakespeare has never since been thought of in quite the same way as other poets. This may be regretted. One may well feel that Shakespearean criticism lost for ever a degree of sanity and clarity when it was no longer possible to write of Shakespeare as Dryden and Pope and Johnson could—as a great writer, a very great writer if you will, but not as a writer of a different creation. But though it may be regretted, it cannot be undone. The vast *machine à gloire* has rolled for too

[1] THE GREAT SHAKESPEARE JUBILEE, by *Christian Deelman*. Viking Press. $6.95.

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long on its Juggernaut way, until by now, just as no literate person can read *Hamlet* for the first time, so no critic can achieve an independent, indifferent judgment on Shakespeare. Attempts to do so result merely in eccentricity; better to accept one's fate and understand what it involves.

It involves essentially the fact that Shakespeare does not, so to speak, reach one by the same route as other poetry. Jane Austen's Henry Crawford was already aware of that, when he observed that "Shakespeare one gets acquainted with without knowing how. It is a part of an Englishman's constitution. . . . One is intimate with him by instinct"; and although, of course, he was speaking only for the English—and indeed, at that time, only for the gentry in England—I believe that what he noted is still valid (more valid now than when he said it) for all in the English-speaking world who have any interest at all in literature. This means that Shakespeare is not just one part of one's taste for and experience in poetry; he is a taken-for-granted foundation of the whole of it. No one, I suppose, could confess an inability to appreciate Shakespeare without at once forfeiting any claim to being considered as capable of appreciating poetry at all. And that would hardly be so of any other poet. I might admit myself allergic to the poetry of Spenser, Shelley and Wallace Stevens, and I would not be pronounced irretrievably lost (unless perhaps, on some campuses, with respect to the last-named). But this is not because Shakespeare is all that *better* than all the others. He is not so undiscussably superior in all things to Chaucer, or Milton, or Wordsworth: still less so, if we go outside English and allow Dante and Homer to be considered. It is a difference of kind, not of quality: but the moment one tries to analyse what this difference is, and how much of it is really in Shakespeare and how much given to him by us, then the difficulties start. In my own experience, I have had the chance, two or three times, of seeing a Greek tragedy or a tragedy by Racine well acted and well produced; and the effect of it has always been to make me decide: "*This* is the real thing. This is true adult art: civilised, controlled, perfected. Compared with this, Shakespeare is crude, chaotic, half-digested." Very soon, of course, the effect faded; I went back to Shakespeare. But not because I changed my mind; in a way, I am still of that mind. What happened was both simpler and stranger. It just didn't matter.

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All Shakespearean criticism, one could almost say, has been one long groping for an answer to that paradox. The first wave—from Ben Jonson to Samuel Johnson, more or less—found an answer in what I have elsewhere called the doctrine of the Great Exception; Shakespeare was great in spite of this, in spite of that, in spite of the other. Romantic criticism, rejecting this, evolved its counter-doctrine—the doctrine of Perfection. Everything in Shakespeare is wonderful; everything is meaningful; if we fail to admire at any point, the fault is not his, but ours. This—the doctrine that Shaw called "Bardolatry"—may have been started by Coleridge. But it still flourishes, more wildly, indeed, than Coleridge could have imagined; for as the sheer mass and minuteness of Shakespearean commentary increase, so must the Bardolatry, since there is an ever-increasing temptation to extract the maximum from the ever-shrinking residue still untapped. Bardolatry is nonsense; in my own judgment (somewhat heretical in the 1960's) the classical doctrine of Exception was much nearer the truth: but Bardolatry *is* a recognition of, an effort to cope with, the central puzzle about Shakespeare, this curious *invulnerability*. We have all felt it; the most devoted of admirers can sometimes be irritated by it; it extends itself, absurdly, even to his physical appearance—that smooth self-satisfied egg of a face, staring out across Stratford church above the all too facile pen. For, of course, the puzzle is uneasily divided between literary criticism and biography. We have never known enough about Shakespeare; we have always—unfortunately, some may think—known something. Better, perhaps, if we had enjoyed about him the total ignorance we enjoy of the authors of *Beowulf* and the *Iliad;* or better, at the other extreme, if he were as exhaustively documented as Byron. But offering as he does one or two tantalising quasi-glimpses into what appears to be his "personality," he was foredoomed from the start to be a victim of the Romantic interest in a poet's *vie intime*. (It is noticeable, and not coincidental, that the Sonnets were almost totally scorned and neglected until towards the end of the 18th century.) It was equally predictable that when a reaction arose against the Romantic approach, it would lead to a school of Shakespearean criticism which would ostentatiously turn its back on anything biographical—and by extension, on anything historical—and produce a commentary on the writings as if they lived in a

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vacuum emptied at once of time and place and a human individual. Thus, if one took a random sample out of a library of Shakespeareana, excluding the lunatic fringe which say that Shakespeare wasn't Shakespeare at all, one would be pretty sure to find it was made up of works of these kinds: the biographical; the literary-critical with a tinge of biographical; the literary-critical untouched by the biographical; and the "background," literary or social or intellectual.

In this the Year 200, if we count from Garrick, of the Shakespeare Religion, there is no difficulty in assembling such a random sample merely from the works published within the year itself. I have been sent a score of them for review; and here we begin, starting with the biographical.

II

Of these, two are thoroughly speculative, those by Rowse and Hotson; two less obviously so, by Halliday and Quennell; and one hardly speculative at all, by Alexander. (Of all of them, I would say, Alexander's is the soundest; though it is also, alas, somewhat dull.) And as pendants to these may be added two largely biographical books on the Sonnets, by Rowse again and Dover Wilson; and a "pictorial biography," by Halliday.[2]

From all these "Lives of Shakespeare," taken together, only one conclusion is possible. There is *no such thing* as a "Life of Shakespeare." There can't be, because there isn't the material. If one looks analytically at these volumes which call themselves "Lives of Shakespeare," these, you will find, are the ingredients they are made from:

1. A recital—more or less original, more or less detailed—of some of the numerous picturesque facts available about life in Elizabethan and Jacobean England, and especially in its theatres;
2. Intercalated with the above, a recital of the very few facts—even fewer of them picturesque—available about William Shakespeare;

[2] WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, by *A. L. Rowse*. Harper & Row. $6.95. Mr. W. H., by *Leslie Hotson*. Knopf. $6.95. THE LIFE OF SHAKESPEARE, by *F. E. Halliday*. Penguin Books. $1.25. SHAKESPEARE: A BIOGRAPHY, by *Peter Quennell*. World. $6.95. SHAKESPEARE, by *Peter Alexander*. Oxford. $1.70. SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS, by *A. L. Rowse*. Harper & Row. $5.00. AN INTRODUCTION TO SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS, by *J. Dover Wilson*. Cambridge. $2.75. SHAKESPEARE, A PICTORIAL BIOGRAPHY, by *F. E. Halliday*. Viking. $6.50.

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3. A pseudo-commentary on Shakespeare's writings, which is used as a means of mitigating the vast disparity between (1) and (2) above and supplying what is in fact a quite illegitimate connection between them.

This last technique is often used with a breathtaking lack of intellectual scruple. If—to take an example from Halliday—you wish to conceal your total ignorance of how Shakespeare behaved when his son Hamnet died, but if in spite of this ignorance you wish to give a false impression of proving that he was overwhelmed with grief, then what you do is to quote a speech from *King John* about the death of a boy prince, add your own gloss—"for him Hamnet was all England"—and carry on to your next paragraph hoping that your readers haven't noticed your conjuring. By such methods, I or anyone could "prove" anything about Shakespeare and his son. He may have hated the brat for all I know. The brat may not have been his for all Halliday knows. Indeed, now I think of it, that is surely the truth. For Mrs. Shakespeare, it does appear, was a lady of easy yielding; and her William left her on her own in Stratford for months every year; and has anyone, anywhere, written with more agonizing truthfulness about a husband's jealousy and his suspicions that his child might not be his, than Shakespeare wrote in *The Winter's Tale*? "And *his* pond fished by his next neighbour, by Sir Smile his neighbour"—Sir Smile, it is all too obvious, was a burgess of Stratford. . . .

Thus, what we call "Lives of Shakespeare" suffer, all of them, from a chasm in the middle. Background and foreground never meet. If it is of Boswell we are writing, it is relevant to say something about the eighteenth century's morbid passion for the Hanged Man, its cult of Macheath and Tyburn Tree—because we *know* that Boswell fully shared that passion; if we are writing of Wordsworth, there is point in commenting on the Reign of Terror in Paris—because we *know* what it meant to his mind and imagination. But the page or two which every "Life of Shakespeare" feels obliged to include about the disembowellings of traitors at the Tower and the exhibiting of their heads on London Bridge—these gory paragraphs hang fatuously in the air, for we haven't the faintest idea how the scenes they describe affected the man who is meant to be at the centre of the book, or even if they affected him at all. The futility of it can be easily gauged by imagining an equiv-

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alent about a figure of our own times. Imagine that nothing was known of Lawrence save his creative works; we didn't have his own letters, or the memoirs of other people about him, or anything at all except the stories and the poems. And along comes a Rowse or a Quennell or a Halliday in the twenty-fourth century, and he burbles away in this style: "How young Bert must have revelled—this sharp-eyed provincial boy with his deep love of England—in the splendours of the old Queen's Diamond Jubilee! How his heart must have lifted at the brave deeds of her soldiers on the African veldt!" Well, we know in fact what nonsense that would be, and the Rowses, etc. of the twenty-fourth century will have to write other sorts of nonsense about Lawrence: but we have no means of checking its equivalent about Shakespeare.

But it is just this kind of thing which is the basis of all "Lives of Shakespeare." It must be: there is no other. Some books, of course, use it with discretion and tact, others with the grossest absurdity. Of the latter kind, Rowse and Hotson are here the leaders. Rowse's performances are fantastic. They should not be thought of as contributions to Shakespearean or any other kind of scholarship, but as the latest instalments in the unfolding autobiography of a very odd character called A. L. Rowse. The clue to this character, I suspect, is that what he really believes himself to be is a poet. He is aware that this opinion is not shared by contemporary literary taste; hence follow two things—a bitter anger against literary critics and scholars, and a passionate fanatical involvement (the passion of thwarted creativeness) in his own thesis. What he actually proposes about Shakespeare is very conventional; Southampton for the young man has always been a major contender, and as for the Dark Lady, Rowse just gives her up as insoluble. But this negligible contribution is presented with extraordinary fanfares of self-approval and announcements of the certainty which he, unlike literary critics, has managed to attain because he is a trained historian. Certainty my foot! His work is a mosaic of the rankest guesswork presented as fact. Here are three examples, all within twenty pages. "And so the Sonnets were folded and put away, at Southampton House. . . . We have no reason to doubt that *A Midsummer Nights Dream* was produced to grace the occasion (of the Countess of Southampton's second marriage) . . . . No doubt he (Shakespeare) played the part (of Berowne)

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himself . . ."—there isn't a scrap of evidence for a single one of those pieces of "history."

Hotson's *Mr. W. H.* is a much more agreeable book than Rowse's —it doesn't make your toes curl with embarrassment for the human race—and I wish I could say I thought it more plausible, for I have had much pleasure and instruction from its author's earlier works. But in truth, it seems to me wildly off-centre. It proposes for Mr. W. H. one William Hatcliffe, an obscure student of law and country gentleman; and this initial improbability—for I would have thought it overwhelmingly clear that the young man of the Sonnets was a man of the nobility—is pressed by a chain of arguments of pitiful thinness. The trouble with Hotson's method is its mania for particularity. Every detail in the poems must have a specific reference. If one sonnet talks of "art made tongue-tied by authority," it must refer to one particular period of censorship; if another has "the painful warrior famoused for worth," that must refer to Drake. As if art weren't always in danger from authority! as if Drake were the only warrior who led an expedition which failed! The reason for this particularity is clear. Everything, but everything, must be made to subserve the dominant thesis. The thesis, in this case, implies a date; for Hotson's argument, the Sonnets must have been written in 1589. So—the lines about censorship must refer to one specific bout of Governmental intolerance in 1589; the line about the warrior must be about an expedition of Drake's which came to a bad end in the same year. But poets don't work like that. They are not daily journalists; they don't *have* to be topical.

Indeed, this forcing of all details into the strait-jacket of the one thesis seems the curse of these Shakespearean biographies, and it is often in matters of dating that it comes out most blatantly. In the case of the Sonnets, dating is crucial for the two principal contenders as the young man, because one of them (Southampton) is rather too old and the other (Pembroke) is rather too young. In 1597, for example, Southampton was twenty-four; Pembroke seventeen; and William Shakespeare thirty-three. Twenty-four is a bit mature to be addressed as "lovely boy"; younger than seventeen is hardly mature enough to be urged so importunately to marry. So all the Southamptonites are anxious to have the Sonnets dated *early;* all the Pembrokians want them *late*. And it is painfully clear

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that what both teams do is first to choose their man (for reasons, I sometimes suspect, emotional rather than rational) and then to tailor their dating arguments to fit. Dover Wilson—a Pembrokian, and therefore a late-dater—is sure that the references in Sonnet 124 ("under the blow of thrallèd discontent") are to the Gunpowder Plot of 1605; Rowse—Southamptonite and early-dater—is equally certain that they point to the "campaign against the Jesuits in 1594-5." Reason would say: "They might equally refer to either; they might just as well refer to neither." But this goes on all through these writings—this shrill conviction of certainty on the part of each investigator, which appears so patently unwarranted when one looks at them all. On Sonnet 107 ("Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul . . ."), Dover Wilson observes that what it refers to "has always been obvious to readers of common sense"—to the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603. (Late date again, you note.) Rowse is equally tart. "All Elizabethan scholars of any judgment recognise that 'the mortal moon' refers to Queen Elizabeth"—yes, but not to her death, he avers, but to a threat against her life in 1594. (Early date again, you note.) The man they are both being nasty about without naming is Hotson; and *he* had announced that the "mortal moon" was the Armada in 1588. That isn't all of them: along comes Quennell, with the bright idea that what it *really* refers to is the Queen's attainment of her "grand climacteric"—age 63 in 1596.

In face of which, one can only giggle at Rowse's claim to have arrived at "precise dating." Or perhaps one should rather weep; for it is sad to see so much talent and knowledge and enthusiasm expended on a chase so futile. And even if it were successful, it would still be futile; for the mere *identifying* of Young Man, Dark Lady, and Rival Poet would do us no good. If we could get to know them, if we could learn exactly how they and Shakespeare were entangled, *that* would be interesting. But as it is—this kind of "biography" remains incurably a stream of facts and guesses, which drifts along parallel to its subject and never touches him. There *is* a kind of knowledge which is not irrelevant; and Halliday's *Pictorial Biography* gives us some of it. One is brought far nearer to "the real Shakespeare" by Halliday's reproduction of the page in Holinshed which tells, in Gothic type and with the oddest of woodcuts, how two men in Scotland

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> went sporting by the way togither without other companie, saue only themselues, passing through the woodes and fieldes, when sodenly in the middes of a lande, there met them .iij. women in straunge and ferly apparell, resembling creatures of an elder worlde, whom when they attentiuely behelde, wondering much at the sight, the first of them spake and sayde: All hayle Makbeth . . .

For when you see that page, you see something which you *know* touched directly the imagination of the man; and when you speculate—on why it touched it to such effect, on just what was the magic trigger ("creatures of an elder worlde," perhaps?)—you are speculating on something which has at once a sound basis in provable fact and a direct relevance to poetry. The identifying of Mr. W. H. has neither.

III

It is no wonder, then, that much of contemporary Shakespearean criticism is resolutely anti-biographical: by which I mean not merely that it makes no reference either to William Shakespeare "the Man" or to the Elizabethan age, but also that it can give the impression that neither the one nor the other ever existed. (A glance at Johnson's commentary will show the difference. Johnson deals not at all in biographical speculation and not much in "background"; but his whole criticism is permeated by a sense of personality and of history.) Of this kind I have five specimens,[3] and since we have just been talking about the Sonnets, we might start with Murray Krieger's *A Window to Criticism,* which purports to deal with them. It is comically different from the works of Rowse and the other biographers on the same poems; one could easily imagine, but for some odd verbal coincidences in the quotations, that it was not concerned with those poems at all. For what it does is to *de-humanise* them; it proposes to "treat the Sonnets as a metaphorical entity, a single body of mythology, of systemic (*sic*) meaning"; its interest "centers on the metaphorical system they develop." The fact—if it *is* a fact for Krieger—that these are poems about two or three particular human beings, caught in a tangle of spirit and body, has just disappeared: they have become

[3] A WINDOW TO CRITICISM, by *Murray Krieger.* Princeton. $5.00. THE ART OF SHAKESPEARE, by *John Arthos.* Barnes & Noble. $6.00. SHAKESPEARE: THE ROMAN PLAYS, by *Derek Traversi.* Stanford. $6.00. THIS GREAT STAGE, by *R. B. Heilman.* Univ. of Washington. $5.00. LOVERS MEETING, by various authors. Carnegie Studies in English. $1.75.

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instead documents to assist the critic "to move beyond the New Criticism." There seems an unconscious arrogance here; instead of the criticism serving the poetry, the poetry is made to serve the criticism. And to do that, it is subjected to some cruel manipulations. "Indeed, my attempt to make a metaphorical system of them (the Sonnets) rather requires that I view them as if they were a single entity, written simultaneously"—yes, but they weren't, and he knows they weren't, and wouldn't a degree of intellectual humility suggest the abandonment of an "attempt" which can only be made on a foundation known to be false?

This is a danger always inherent in criticism which serves a theory—the danger of distorting in order to fit—but though it certainly exists in the "theme-hunting" method which derives from Wilson Knight, I think it is successfully resisted in Heilman's *This Great Stage,* which is an essay in that method as applied to *King Lear.* This is a re-issue of a work originally published in 1948, and it certainly deserves its revival. It follows some dominant themes through the play—sight and seeing, clothes and nakedness, animality, madness—and because these themes are really there and really dominant—neither invented nor exaggerated by the critic—it says something of value about the play. I have found myself latterly turning against the theme-hunting method; but largely, I think, because it seems to me by now exhausted. Sixteen years ago, it still had life in it. You could say of Heilman's book, as of all its kind, that it sometimes forgets the existence of a theatre and a playwright; but this, though true, is merely to say that no method will encompass the whole of Shakespeare. Heilman is puzzled, for example, by Edmund's semi-repentance at the end, when he apparently tries to save Cordelia's life, and he calls it sentimental: he forgets that Shakespeare, for theatrical effect, wants everyone, dead or alive, on stage for the ending, and is not too scrupulous how he brings it about.

Of the Carnegie Studies booklet of essays about five of the plays, rather coyly entitled *Lovers Meeting,* I must confess that I felt it somewhat out of place in the Big League; these essays, I have no doubt, did very well as starters for seminar-discussion in Pittsburgh, but they do look surprised at themselves in cold and public print. As for John Arthos' *The Art of Shakespeare,* I found this a curiously elusive book. It leans towards the Christian-

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mystical school of Shakespearean interpretation; we hear, not for the first or last time, of "the Christian doctrines of resurrection and redemption" in *The Winter's Tale;* but it doesn't follow that line with wholehearted consistency, and perhaps as a result of that I found great difficulty in seeing where the argument was going to. A certain opaqueness seems to hang over the points being made, and even more over the connections between them; the tendency to allegorize and subjectivize is strong—there is talk of *Othello* as a "tragedy of the life within"—and I have come to the regrettable conclusion that the air in which such flights is made is altogether too rarefied for my earthbound organism. I think, of course—as we all do—that Shakespeare would have agreed with me. *His* Muse, like his mistress, when she walked, trod on the ground; and when writers in the medieval-Renaissance tradition were writing allegorically, they were quite clear about it themselves and made it quite clear to their readers. *And* they had a strong sense of the proper time and place and form in which to be allegorical; and neither time nor place nor form was supplied by the popular theatres of the Bankside.

No one could possibly accuse Derek Traversi of ascending into rarefied airs; one sometimes wishes he would. His method, as he confesses in the preface to its latest example, *Shakespeare: the Roman Plays,* is "that of following the text in detail," and this, he recognises, "does not always make for easy reading." It certainly does not. What it does make for is incessant repetition. "Once more true feeling turns into the assumption of a pose. . . . Once more, it is necessary to distinguish carefully between the pose and the presence of true emotion . . ."—and as soon as you have noticed the "once mores" and "once agains," you hear them recurring throughout like a nervous tic.[4] Everything is expounded, nothing is left alone, so that inevitably the commentary must often degenerate into a mere alternation of quotation and paraphrase, the latter doing nothing more than to dilute and weaken the former:

> "High-battled Caesar" is, in fact, being asked to "unstate his happiness," to make a spectacle of himself, for the benefit of a "sworder," a soldier of fortune. So considered, the challenge is decisive proof that Antony's "judgment" has been finally subdued:

[4] In the discussion of *Antony and Cleopatra* alone, they occur on these pages: 93, 116, 117, 118, 130, 152, 157, 158, 164, 175, 180, 181, 182, 189, 191, 194, 197, 198 (twice).

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I see men's judgments are
A parcel of their fortunes, and things outward
Do draw the inward quality after them,
To suffer all alike.

(III.xi.31)

But it is not the extreme tedium which this generates that is the serious argument against it. It is radically *wrong* for the kind of art it is applied to. By subjecting the whole play to the same unvarying, unpausing scrutiny, it destroys all sense of change of pace—and change of pace is of the essence of drama. And drama, as far as ideas or themes go, is a simple form; a play is based on one or two plain propositions or situations, which it then hammers home through a sequence of actions. It cannot afford the multiplicity of propositions which a novel can contain, because a play has to make its effect in a single hearing of two or three hours. A commentary which records, again and again, separately every time, the recurrence of the basic propositions, is falsifying the drama; for in the theatre they are not felt as separate—they come too quickly for that—they are felt as a stream of words and actions, and the stream is unbroken. But Traversi, here as always, writes as if he had never been in a theatre in his life.

IV

The survivors of my score of assignments are inevitably miscellaneous. One is a discussion of a single aspect of Shakespeare's thought—what his plays seem to say about politics. One is a scholarly account of his early plays related to other Elizabethan dramas. There are two works of popularization. And finally, there are three collections of critical essays by various hands.[5] Of the first of these, Bloom and Jaffa's *Shakespeare's Politics,* I would be inclined to say that I thought it about the most interesting and original of the lot. To say which is a blow to my professional self-esteem, since its authors are not Professors of English, but of Government and Political Science. Of this they make—justifiably

[5] SHAKESPEARE'S POLITICS, by *Allan Bloom,* with *Harry V. Jaffa.* Basic Books. $5.00. ELIZABETHAN DRAMA AND SHAKESPEARE'S EARLY PLAYS, by *E. W. Talbert.* Univ. of North Carolina. $8.00. THE SHAKESPEAREAN IMAGINATION, by *Norman N. Holland.* Macmillan. $7.50. HOW SHAKESPEARE SPENT THE DAY, by *Ivor Brown.* Hill & Wang. $5.00. STUDIES IN SHAKESPEARE, edited by *Peter Alexander.* Oxford. $1.95. SHAKESPEARE 400, edited by *James G. McManaway.* Holt, Rinehart. $6.00. SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGEDIES, edited by *Laurence Lerner.* Penguin Books. $1.25.

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—a virtue, pointing out that Shakespeare wrote in the Renaissance tradition, whereby a poet was a *teacher,* in the directest and simplest sense of the word, and what he taught was how to live in the real world: including the world of politics. The poet, moreover, wrote for the people in general, and what he wrote had to be comprehended by them. Contemporary literary criticism—and especially, I fear, that increasingly large share of it which is produced in University departments of English—has largely abandoned those notions. (In practice, at any rate: you may often find lip-service paid to them.) Bloom and Jaffa go back to them, and the result is a book which seems remarkably original now, precisely because it would have seemed commonplace two or three hundred years ago. The Shakespeare who emerges from their investigation is a disillusioned but humane Conservative. He was doubtful about "introducing influences that are too foreign" into a state (*Othello*); he was pessimistic about a commercial community's half-hearted experiments in racial and religious toleration *(Merchant of Venice).* He saw that the greatness of Rome had a rotten foundation—"the corruption of the people is the key to the mastery of Rome." He was an "imitator of nature," not a creator of a self-enclosed world of ideal symbols; and he believed in commonsense. You wouldn't imagine (unless you know the world of academic criticism) how indecently novel these ancient truisms have become.

With Talbert's *Elizabethan Drama and Shakespeare's Early Plays* we are not, I fear, in an atmosphere of such stimulating difference. Not that this is an exercise in the rarefied. Far from it: it is a sternly scholarly examination of the characters, topics, situations, techniques, etc., which were common in Elizabethan drama, and an investigation of how much Shakespeare made use of them. I felt hopeful when the author promised he would always remember that what he wrote about was living drama; but I could not feel he carried out his promise. A vital sense of the Elizabethan world and its theatres seemed to me sadly absent, though there were masses of facts about them. Too many facts, perhaps; the life was buried under piles of information about a host of insignificant plays. Or perhaps it was a matter of style; for the book does employ a very strange jargon—"literary geneticists," "liminal," "disjunction," "sophistic" (a noun, apparently), "poetizing," "verbal and

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conceptual process"—which I for one found most effectively destructive of any sense either of reality or of art.

The works of popularization are Norman Holland's *The Shakespearean Imagination* and Ivor Brown's *How Shakespeare Spent the Day*. The former is based on a TV course given to "an audience that ranged from high-school students to Ph.D.'s" (according to the blurb), and I must say that the book made me wish I had seen the programme. It begins with two introductory chapters which fill in the background and outline the course of Shakespearean criticism and scholarship; these chapters are extremely brisk and lively—but they are sound. So are the comments on Shakespeare's language. "There is no use expecting from Shakespeare the kind of cause-and-effect thinking that we do today. For him the heart is not just a pump, but the noblest of organs. His language falls naturally into patterns of analogy and comparison. Ours does not." The book then goes on to review some dozen selected plays. As critic, Holland is very much an "image-cluster" man; he is also slightly addicted to anthropologizing, and when this extends to calling the Viola-Sebastian twin-pair "this androgynous, hermaphroditic young thing" and likening them to the Christ Child of Epiphany, I feel symptoms of revolt. But all in all this book strikes me as a very worthy piece of popularization; it simplifies without distorting and it is bright without being brash.

The latest work of the industrious Ivor Brown, though a good deal less original and lively than Holland's, is also respectable popularization. *How Shakespeare Spent the Day* aims at describing that aspect of Shakespeare which criticism tends to ignore—the professional man of the theatre, "actor, manager, and investor, as well as author." It does the job reasonably well, on a firm basis of proven or provable fact. It cannot conceal, though, the sad truth that almost all these facts do not relate directly to Shakespeare but only to the environment he lived in or to others in the same world. What you get, then, is not what makes him different, but only what makes him like all the rest. We know that he was a professional man of the theatre; we know well enough how such a man lived and worked in the London of the Elizabethans; what we do not know is the relationship, in William Shakespeare, between professional and poet. If one relied on the tone of the references, in plays and sonnets, to actors and acting, one could only conclude that the

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poet was sick to death of the professional and longed in vain for a nice kind noble patron to get him out of it all. The conclusion that some middlebrow propagandists are apt to draw is that because he was a professional, therefore he was just like themselves—a cosy mixture of Terence Rattigan and Laurence Olivier. We may not know what he was; we can be very sure he wasn't *that*.

We come at last to the three collections of essays by a variety of authors. *Shakespeare 400* is a thoroughly learned and scholarly assortment; every one of the 26 contributors is an academic, and most of the contributions carry their proper loads of reference and footnote. It is a book which would have astonished its subject beyond measure; and in fact an oddly ironic effect, enforcing that thought, is provided by the illustrations. For these reproduce playbills of early American performances; thus, the citizens of St. Louis, on July 31, 1835, were offered "Shakespeare's Celebrated Tragedy of HAMLET, Prince of Denmark!" and then, "to conclude the Entertainments of the Evening, a laughable Farce (in one act) called INTRIGUE, *or,* Married Yesterday!!!"—and certainly the only begetter of *Shakespeare 400* would have seen himself much more easily in that world than in the world of the Professors.[6]

Studies in Shakespeare offers ten essays selected from the annual British Academy Shakespeare Lectures, ranging in time from Bradley on *Coriolanus* in 1912 to Richard David's *Shakespeare and the Players* in 1961. There are some notable and famous essays in between, such as the preliminary sketch of Caroline Spurgeon's work on the imagery and Granville Barker's *From Henry V to Hamlet.* To an American reader it may well appear the Old British Guard: and so, on the whole, it is. There is a certain anti-modernist air about the book—not always, by any means, wrongly so; indeed, the best specimens of this rather conservative criticism seem to me to wear better than the novelties. And another sign of anti-modernism which is certainly welcome is that most of these essays actually make some concessions to literary elegance—a quality not merely neglected but deeply suspect in most academic writings nowadays.

[6] Incidentally, *Shakespeare 400* seems to me to pose a nice little problem of publishing ethics. The book is, word for word, a reproduction in hard covers of the Spring 1964 issue of *Shakespeare Quarterly;* but I can find no acknowledgment of this in the book or on its jacket or in its publicity handouts. I wonder how many libraries, already subscribing to *Shakespeare Quarterly* as all fair-sized libraries do, are going to find themselves expending six good dollars on something they have already obtained and paid for.

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Laurence Lerner's "anthology of modern criticism" on the tragedies is a thoroughly useful collection; he ought to follow it up with companions on the comedies and histories. It has two to six essays or extracts on each of the tragedies and a few more on tragedy in general. The selection is eclectic; all "schools" are fairly represented. All of them, I think, I had read before; re-reading now, it was notable how Bradley on Iago and Wilson Knight on the grotesque comedy of *Lear* stood out. The best is the best, whatever school it belongs to.

V

I ought, I suppose, to attempt a summing-up. But of course it can't be done. The sheer size of the thing—the Shakespeare Industry, the Shakespearean Process, call it what you like—defeats comment. One's inevitable thought, after a long immersion in it, is that it really ought to be *stopped,* allowed a holiday, just for a year or two. But it won't be. It can't be: too many pressures, ranging from the commercial through the academic-careerist to the honestly anxious to enlighten and explain, are always at work, and they are not going to stop. All I can offer are a few hard-earned principles: *Rules for Shakespearean Criticism* I call them, and here they are:

Rule 1. Never forget that what you are writing about is drama, written for public performance in a theatre. *But:*

This does not mean that you must be for ever remembering what you (or Hotson or Hodges or Thorndike) think the Globe looked like, or perpetually reminiscing about Gielgud's Hamlet and Olivier's Lear. It is improbable that you will be much of a Shakespearean critic if you don't have some notion of an Elizabethan theatre; and the more theatre-going experience you can have, the better. Any production of Shakespeare, however bad, is better for you than no production of Shakespeare. *But:*

The important thing is to preserve in your criticism awareness of the essentials of drama, which are these: action; impact immediate and aural (awareness of listeners); change of pace; humanity. If these are lost sight of, you are off the right road. They can be preserved even in criticism which would seem to lose them; thus Wilson Knight, even at his most eccentric, his most ethereal, does

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preserve them. They can be lost even in criticism which seems to preserve them; it is all too easy to have the most intimate knowledge possible of Elizabethan theatres and theatre-going—and no sense at all of what is meant by drama.

Rule 2. Know what can be known of the working-conditions of Shakespeare's life as dramatist, and respect the limitations which they must have imposed on him and should impose on your criticism. You are dealing with someone who worked in a crowded, hurried, commercial, competitive environment; to attribute to such a writer the elaboration of symbolic structures and metaphorical systems, or to refuse to admit in him moments of carelessness, incompleteness, and cynical surrender to what the public wanted, is to deny the existence of facts because they interfere with your fancies. *But:*

Remember that this knowledge will tell you only of those parts of Shakespeare in which he resembled others—many others. It will not tell you wherein he was unique—which is, or should be, why you are writing about him.

Rule 3. Realise that about "Shakespeare the Man"—a describable, identifiable, historical individual—you know so little to the purpose that you might as well call it nothing. Constantly resist the temptation to pretend that this is not true. Avoid like the plague such phrases as "we can well imagine . . .", "Shakespeare must surely have . . .", and so forth. They will lead you in the end to a "Shakespeare" who is nothing but your wish-fulfilment projection in Elizabethan dress. *But:*

Your criticism of Shakespeare will be of no value unless, in spite of the above, it is made from, and conveys, a vivid sense that there is a personality behind this. This is really the central paradox of Shakespeare—that a writer who is so enormously elusive, so successfully hidden, should nevertheless distil a quality of personality much stronger than that of many of whom we are all too well informed. The isolating and defining of this personality is the central object of Shakespearean criticism. But, as with awareness of the dramatic quality, it is not something which can be separated, or expressed in a sentence—or in a paragraph or a chapter, for that matter: it must permeate the whole of one's writing about Shakespeare, it must be *there* even when the particular topic might seem to exclude it.

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Rule 4. On the matter of "background" knowledge, the more you can learn of Elizabethan society, ways of thought, politics, religion, literature, etc., the better; for it is very clear that Shakespeare was continually aware of the society and age he lived in, a positive sponge for impressions, a magpie for details; and unless you know where these came from, you are certain, sooner or later, to get things wrong. *But:*

Remember again that we are totally unsure about Shakespeare's attitude or opinion on any major issue of his time. That he was deeply, passionately, interested in all of them, we do know: but that is all we know. A popular playwright in that age (unlike our own) was under no obligation to hold opinions at all and no temptation to promulgate them; and no one would have paid him much attention if he had. In so far as he was a playwright, then, Shakespeare had no opinions; and if you catch yourself saying, for instance, that Shakespeare's political ideas were conservative, remind yourself that by "Shakespeare" you should be meaning simply a distillation from the plays. This distinction, which may seem pedantic, is in fact important.

Rule 5. Rule 4 should be extended to cover all opinions, not merely those of the Elizabethan age. Resist sternly the temptation to present a "Shakespeare" who is a Christian, a Platonic allegorist, a believer in progress and democracy, a mocker at progress and democracy, an anti-militarist, a patriotic militarist, and so forth.

Rule 6 and last. When you are concerned with Shakespeare's language—when you are analysing his poetry—two things are to be always borne in mind. First—which is an aspect of Rule 1—remember that this language was made to convey an immediate effect through the ear. However many layers of subtleties you may detect behind this, your analysis is demonstrably wrong if it blurs the first impact. Second—your analysis must be based on some knowledge of the norms of Elizabethan English. You will not get "th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame" right if you don't know —as at least one commentator did not know—that "spirit" had a meaning not spiritual but physiological.

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RICHMOND LATTIMORE

The Odyssey of Homer

Book 11, lines 1-137

Now when we had gone down again to the sea and our vessel,
first of all we dragged the ship down into the bright water,
and in the black hull set the mast in place, and set sails,
and took the sheep and walked them aboard, and ourselves also
embarked, but sorrowful, and weeping big tears. Circe
of the lovely hair, the dread goddess who talks with mortals,
sent us an excellent companion, a following wind, filling
the sails, to carry from astern the ship with the dark prow.
We ourselves, over all the ship making fast the running gear,
sat still, and let the wind and the steersman hold her steady.
All day long her sails were filled as she went through the water,
and the sun set, and all the journeying-ways were darkened.
She made the limit, which is of the deep-running Ocean.
There lie the community and city of Kimmerian people,
hidden in fog and cloud, nor does Helios, the radiant
sun, ever break through the dark, to illuminate them with his
shining,
neither when he climbs up into the starry heaven,
nor when he wheels to return again from heaven to earth,
but always a glum night is spread over wretched mortals.
Making this point, we ran the ship ashore, and took out
the sheep, and ourselves walked along by the stream of the Ocean
until we came to that place of which Circe had spoken.
There Perimedes and Eurylochos held the victims
fast, and I, drawing from beside my thigh my sharp sword,
dug a pit, of about a cubit in each direction,
and poured it full of drink-offerings for all the dead, first
honey mixed with milk, and the second pouring was sweet wine,
and the third, water, and over it all I sprinkled white barley.
I promised many times to the strengthless heads of the perished
dead, that, returning to Ithaka, I would slaughter a barren
cow, my best, in my palace, and pile the pyre with treasures,

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and to Teiresias apart would dedicate an all-black
ram, the one conspicuous in all our sheep-flocks.
Now when with sacrifices and prayers I had so entreated
the hordes of the dead, I took the sheep and cut their throats
over the pit, and the dark-clouding blood ran in, and the souls
of the perished dead gathered to the place, up out of Erebos,
brides, and young unmarried men, and long-suffering elders,
virgins, tender and with the sorrows of young hearts upon them,
and many fighting men killed in battle, stabbed with brazen
spears, still carrying their bloody armor upon them.
These came swarming around my pit from every direction
with inhuman clamor, and green fear took hold of me.
Then I encouraged my companions and told them, taking
the sheep, that were lying by, slaughtered with the cruel bronze,
to skin these, and burn them, and pray to the divinities,
to Hades the powerful, and to revered Persephone,
while I myself, drawing from beside my thigh my sharp sword,
crouched there, and would not let the strengthless heads of the
perished
dead draw nearer to the blood, until I had questioned Teiresias.
But first there came the soul of my companion, Elpenor,
for he had not yet been buried under earth of the wide ways,
since we had left his body behind in Circe's palace,
unburied and unwept, with this other errand before us.
I broke into tears at the sight of him, and my heart pitied him,
and so I spoke aloud to him and addressed him in winged words:
'Elpenor, how did you come here beneath the fog and the darkness?
You have come faster on foot than I could in my black ship.'
So I spoke, and he groaned aloud and spoke and answered:
'Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,
the evil will of the spirit and the wild wine bewildered me.
I lay down on the roof of Circe's palace, and never thought,
when I went down, to go by way of the long ladder,
but blundered straight off the edge of the roof, so that my
neck bone
was broken out of its sockets, and my soul went down to Hades.
But now I pray you, by those you have yet to see, who are not here,
by your wife, and by your father, who reared you when you were
little,

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and by Telemachos whom you left alone in your palace;
for I know that after you leave this place and the house of Hades
you will put back with your well-made ship to the island, Aiaia;
there at that time, my lord, I ask that you remember me
and do not go, and leave me behind, unwept, unburied,
when you leave, for fear I might become the gods' curse upon you,
but burn me there with all my armor that belongs to me
and heap up a grave mound beside the beach of the gray sea,
for an unhappy man, so that those to come will know of me.
Do this for me, and on top of the grave mound plant the oar
with which I rowed when I was alive and among my companions.'
So he spoke, and I in turn spoke to him in answer:
'All this, my unhappy friend, I will do for you as you ask me.'
So we two stood there exchanging our sad words, I on
one side holding my sword over the blood, while opposite
me the phantom of my companion talked long with me.
Next there came to me the soul of my dead mother,
Antikleia, daughter of great-hearted Autolykos,
whom I had left alive when I went to sacred Ilion.
I broke into tears at the sight of her and my heart pitied her,
but even so, for all my thronging sorrow, I would not
let her draw near the blood until I had questioned Teiresias.
Now came the soul of Teiresias the Theban, holding
a staff of gold, and he knew who I was, and spoke to me:
'Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,
how is it then, unhappy man, you have left the sunlight
and come here, to look on dead men, and this place without
pleasure?
Now draw back from the pit, and hold your sharp sword away from
me,
so that I can drink of the blood and speak the truth to you.'
So he spoke, and I, holding away the sword with the silver
nails, pushed it back in the sheath, and the flawless prophet,
after he had drunk of the blood began speaking to me:
'Glorious Odysseus, what you are after is a sweet homecoming.
But the god will make it hard for you. I think you will not
escape the shaker of the earth, who holds a grudge against you
in his heart, and because you blinded his dear son, hates you.
But even so and still you might come back, after much suffering,

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if you can contain your own desire, and contain your companions',
at that time when you first put in your well-made vessel
at the island Thrinakia, escaping the sea's blue water,
and there discover pasturing the cattle and the fat sheep
of Helios, who sees all things, and listens to all things.
Then, if you keep your mind on homecoming, and leave these
unharmed,
you might all make your way to Ithaka, after much suffering;
but if you do harm them, then I testify to the destruction
of your ship and your companions, but if you yourself get clear
you will come home in bad case, with the loss of all your
companions,
in someone else's ship, and find troubles in your household,
insolent men, who will be eating away your livelihood
and courting your godlike wife and offering gifts to win her.
You may punish the violences of these men, when you come home.
But after you have killed these suitors in your own palace,
either by treachery, or openly with the sharp bronze,
then you must take up your well-shaped oar and go on a journey
until you come where men are living who know nothing
of the sea, and who eat food that is not mixed with salt, who never
have known ships whose cheeks are painted purple, who never
have known well-shaped oars, which act for ships as wings do.
And I will tell you a very clear proof, and you can not miss it.
When as you walk some other wayfarer happens to meet you
and says you carry a winnowing-fan on your bright shoulder,
then you must plant your well-shaped oar in the ground, and
render
ceremonious sacrifice to the lord Poseidon,
one ram and one bull, and a mounter of sows, a boar pig,
and make your way home again and render holy hecatombs
to the immortal gods who hold the wide heaven, all
of them in order. Death will come to you from the sea, in
some altogether unwarlike way, and it will end you
in the ebbing time of a sleek old age. Your people
about you will be prosperous. All this is true that I tell you.'

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Dum Diana Vitrea

Carmina Burana 37

When Diana, late at night,
for her crystal lamp reclaims
pink and paler light
kindled from her brother's flames,
western winds soft and fair
fill the air,
clear the sky,
and as by
music falling from above
cast their spell
and compel
hearts once hard to yield to love,
as the evening star again
bright and new,
fresh with dew,
charms to sleep mortal men.

O felicity
of sleep careless
that comes to set us free
from all distress,
and through the eyes' entry
making sweet ingress
prepares us for sorcery
of love's progress.

Morpheus, shaper in the mind,
brings us for dreams
soft blowing wind,
murmuring of streams
over clean sand running,
mill wheel sound
all night long turning
slowly round and round
softly to mesmerize
day-weary eyes.

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After love's blandishing
and soft exchanges,
sleep comes languishing;
new strength outranges
all past sweet experience
and swims in new ecstasies of sense.
Lovely to sleep after love's strain,
but lovelier to wake from sleep to love again.

Under green trellises
where Philomela sings the lay
of her sad jealousies,
sweet to sleep the night away,
but sweeter still to play
with a girl in the grass,
and with such beauty pass
all the time away.

Smell of thyme and roses
and all things growing
gently disposes
of all our hearts' undoing,
and the heart in weariness
after love's commerces
softly reposes.

A Meditation for Saint Lucy's Day

The electric grate burns simulated coals. Day's down
to a filler shining between broad layers of black.
My system mutters outrage. But I think of Saint Lucy,

the blonde girl from Italy walking through the night in
Sweden
knocking on door after door, admitted, her head radiant
with candles; then coffee and cake given, house after house

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shining and singing in the dark Santa Lucia. A martyr.
Is it no more than that elderly gallants must court their
Persephones
by rape and death ravishing the flower gatherers in the
meadows?

Or no more than sad wish? Chauncey Depew sat next Mary
Garden,
she in a strapless dress, Mary my dear, what holds that
thing up?
Your age, Mr. Depew, your age. Or Mr. Justice

Holmes, and the pretty girl passing by, and oh
to be seventy again. Such ways, deep weather, heart starves for
summer,
cuddling material innocence in the elderly dark.

But that's the old solitary confinement, the solipsist
hammering
on his last walls. I would be with others in the lighted
room, clutching a little coffee, tobacco and cake

and candles comfort and Lucy against the surrounding
solstice.

Sirens in the Aegaean

This happened. Rowboat. Mid-day.
An old fisherman at the oars
and American passengers,
two girls, one man. The bay
blue, sun gay.
Too much for the girls, that blue
and gold. What could they do?
What could they do but stand
up, take off everything and go over the side

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and paddle there, white hand
on the bow. The old man crossed himself and cried.

All-holy Mary, save
me from me and my love and the white
curve in the blue wave
who damns me to delight
sea-horned devil's daughter
I dreamed in my sinful night
who swims our sea-water
now, in bare daylight.

And the girls laughed, and the old
man sobbed and spat in the bay
and cursed the white hand on the bow.
Nereids drew him that day.
He hated it.

Long ago.
We don't swim that way now.

A. R. AMMONS

Unbroken

Evening falls: earth
  divides:
    insects waken
  as
birds fly to roost:

out there, nothing
  happens:
    everything is
  the
same.

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Contingency

Water from the sprinkler
collects
in street-edge gravel and

makes rocky pools: birds
materialize—puff, bathe
and drink: a green-black

grackle lopes, listing,
across the hot street, pecks
a starling, and drinks: a

robin rears misty with
exultation: twittering comes
in bunches of starts and

flights: shadows pour
across cement and lawn: a
turn of the faucet
dries every motion up.

Interference

A whirlwind in the fields
lifts sand
into its motions
to show, tight, small,
the way it walks
through a summer day:

better take time to watch
the sand-shadow mist—
since every
grain of sand
is being counted by the sun.

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Reflective

I found a
weed
that had a

mirror in it
and that
mirror

looked in at
a mirror
in

me that
had a
weed in it

Way to Go

West light flat on trees:
  bird flying
    deep out in blue glass:
  uncertain wind
stirring the leaves: this is
  the world we have:
    take it

Sitting Down, Looking Up

A silver jet,
riding the top of tundra clouds,
comes over
maybe from Rio:
the aluminum sun shines
on it
as if it were a natural creature.

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HOWARD GREEN

Isak Dinesen

With her taste for paradox, Isak Dinesen must have been amused at her own popularity. She saw her audience grow with every volume since the *Seven Gothic Tales* appeared twenty-five years ago, until at the time of her death in 1962 she had become almost the object of a cult (nor by any means an esoteric one) despite the fact that her stories might never have been anything more than a treat for connoisseurs. Written by a Danish aristocrat under a name not her own and in a language not her own, they are old-fashioned in manner, remote in subject matter and uncongenial in theme. It is surely ironical that we, who have been brought up on Progress, on Scientific Thought, and on the Common Man, should be so fond of a writer for whom Progress is an illusion, Scientific Thought a joke, and the Common Man an unthinkable bore. But a kind of national masochism attracts us to writers—especially from abroad—who make us feel inadequate, and this amiable trait may account for some of her popularity.

But mainly, of course, it is due to her unique narrative gifts, for her tales have a flavor unlike anything else in modern fiction. "I have always thought," she wrote in *Out of Africa,* "that I might have cut a figure at the time of the plague of Florence. Fashions have changed, and the art of listening to a narrative has been lost in Europe. The Natives of Africa, who cannot read, have still got it; if you begin to them: 'There was a man who walked out on the plain, and there he met another man,' you have them all with you, their minds running upon the unknown track of the men on the plain. But white people, even if they feel they ought to, cannot listen to a recital."[1] It is just because fashions have changed, however, that she cuts a figure among us now, for nobody else satisfies that particular kind of elemental narrative pleasure as well as she does. Her tales are indeed recitals, not "private" recitals in the modern mode, where a casual manner and a chatty idiom suggest that the author is speaking to the individual reader alone, but "public" recitals, as if she had an audience assembled around her. And the stately and deliberate elegance of her style, with its some-

[1] All quotations are from *Out of Africa,* unless otherwise indicated.

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what archaic bouquet, suggests that we are all taking part in a ritual, a quasi-religious ceremony, ourselves being the congregation and she the priestess. The suggestion is not accidental.

She is really not so much a writer of short stories as a story-teller, in the old-fashioned sense of that term. Like every competent writer of fiction, she can hold our attention with a good narrative, but she does more than that. She also creates a singular and compelling world whose unfamiliar atmosphere and strange events excite that appetite for the unknown to which fiction makes its deepest and most primitive appeal. Nowadays there are very few writers who can do that, or perhaps very few who want to do it, for invention of this kind is out of style. Not, as we are so often told, because the literary imagination has withered—what could be more astonishingly imaginative than the work of a Proust or a Joyce or a Mann?—but because it has been turned in other directions by the historical changes which have encouraged realism in its various forms. Typically, the twentieth-century writer uses his imagination not so much to invent new worlds as to find subtle and complex ways of portraying the world we already know.

And so fiction is more sophisticated, both metaphysically and psychologically, than ever before, but to Isak Dinesen this is not necessarily an improvement. As Cardinal Salviati, the narrator in "The Cardinal's First Tale" remarks *à propos* of the nineteenth-century realistic novel, its practitioners have become so obsessed with the individual characters that they sacrifice the story itself. And when the lady to whom he is speaking objects that these characters are fascinating in their living, breathing closeness to the reader, he replies: "Mistake me not . . . the literature of which we are speaking—the literature of individuals, if we may call it so, is a noble art, a great, earnest and ambitious human product. But it is a human product. The divine art is the story. In the beginning was the story. At the end we shall be privileged to view, and review, it—and that is what is named the day of judgment." This is curious theology for a prelate, but Dinesen is most worth paying attention to precisely when she sounds most playful, and to revive the story as a "divine art" (however curious *that* may seem in a modern writer) was just what she had in mind.

The "human product," she felt, was too rational. For no matter how uncompromisingly irrational our fiction may appear—however romantic in attitude, abstruse in subject matter, or obscure in

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technique—it is always ultimately rational because it depicts experience in terms the human mind can somehow assent to. This is just as true of a James Joyce as of a Jane Austen, the difference being one of degree not of kind. But, as Dinesen sees it, although such art may gratify our need for bringing order out of chaos, the order it establishes is merely an illusion. In *Out of Africa* she recounts how a lawyer once tried to explain to her what the phrase "an act of God" signified in a legal contract: " 'No, no Madam,' he said, 'You have not quite caught the meaning of the term. What is completely unforeseeable, and not consonant with rule or reason, that is an act of God.' " Her stories depict the workings of this God, who is not in the least rational, but who is, on the contrary, a highly imaginative being, impatient with systems, fond of exercising his "terrifying fancifulness" (to quote the heroine of "Echoes"), and—as she is repeatedly at pains to point out—delighting in change. "The real difference between God and human beings," reflects Boris in "The Monkey," "was that God cannot stand continuance. No sooner has he created a season of a year, or a time of the day, than he wishes for something quite different, and sweeps it all away. . . . And human beings cleave to the existing state of things. All their lives they are striving to hold the moment fast, and are up against a *force majeure*. Their art itself is nothing but the attempt to catch by all means the one particular moment, one mood, one light, the momentary beauty of one woman or one flower, and make it everlasting. It is all wrong . . . to imagine paradise as a never-changing state of bliss. It will probably, on the contrary, turn out to be, in the true spirit of God, an incessant up and down, a whirlpool of change. Only you may yourself, by that time, have become one with God, and have taken to liking it."

The "divine art," then, as opposed to the "human product," should reflect the true spirit of God by bringing its audience face to face with the extraordinary, the unique, the inexplicable, the unpredictable. We would expect its form to be correspondingly unconventional—at least as outlandish as in *Tristram Shandy* or *Ulysses*—but Isak Dinesen's technique is imperturbably conservative. This inconsistency may be partly a caprice to exemplify her own philosophy, and the more we know her, the more likely this seems. However, divine art, like human art, no doubt entails certain compromises, and I suspect she saw that any divine prodi-

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gies of form would be self-defeating, for whoever wants to keep an audience confronted with the unexpected, and at the same time maintain an air of public story-telling, cannot very well afford complicated narrative techniques. And so we find none of those experiments with time or consciousness or language which abounded in fiction during her lifetime. Not that she is unaware of them. She simply finds they get in the way. They adulterate the Story. "The story," as Cardinal Salviati observes, "does not slacken its speed to occupy itself with the mien or bearing of the characters, but goes on." "Speed" is hardly the first word her own stories bring to mind, but, for all their leisurely pace, the narrative momentum is sustained with consistent and notable skill. She establishes the mien and bearing of her characters carefully enough, but it is event rather than character which concerns her, unlike most of her contemporaries, who emphasize the inner world of thought and feeling precisely because they share her conviction (on whatever grounds of their own) that the outer world of events is largely inexplicable and unpredictable. Finding it harder and harder to determine what is "real" in that fast-changing outer world, they tend to deal increasingly with actions which by older standards seem inconsequential. The extent to which this inclination can carry a novelist is painfully exemplified by Samuel Beckett, whose characters sink deeper into catatonia with each succeeding novel.

So it is particularly hard at this moment in history to do what Isak Dinesen proposed for herself, namely, to write "eventful" fiction which will have the robust narrative appeal of an earlier age but which will also embody in its events the modern idea of universal mutability. Did she succeed?

Brilliantly, as far as the narrative aspect is concerned. But the philosophy she seems only to have finessed.

For she appears to have no real taste for what is or could be happening now. *Out of Africa* and *Shadows on the Grass* show how courageously and with what stoic and ironic acceptance she underwent the vicissitudes of her own life, but the ruling mood of these autobiographies is elegiac. They are laments for the past, not in the least celebrations of the changeful present. And almost all her stories are set in the past, usually in the eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries, and so although they are full of surprises and mysteries—a high-bred prioress turns into a monkey, an aristocratic lady of total and ruthless chastity catches syphilis without

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ever having touched a man, a hanged adventurer returns from the grave to dine with his two sisters—they are the surprises and mysteries of the world as it was, as it might have been, or quite often as it never conceivably could have been. We are naturally more inclined to tolerate improbabilities in the long ago or far away, and to trade on that inclination has always been the privilege of romance. But it is hardly open to a writer whose stories are supposed to depict God's universe as a whirlpool of real and present change.

And so she would appear to be a bit of a charlatan, concealing her inability to find authentic matter for the story as divine art behind a brilliant and ingenious treatment of spurious matter. So much, we might think, for her divinity.

But she is elusive when you try to seize her. Like the wild animals she describes so sympathetically in *Out of Africa,* she has a talent for evading you when you least expect it. If she is a divine artist, she will presumably stand in the same relationship to her stories and to her readers as God does to his cosmos and to his subjects, the essence of which is conveyed in the "Tales of Two Old Gentlemen," where we find out why there are no genuine female atheists. It is because man—as opposed to woman—is always confusing himself by trying to interpret the relation between divinity and humanity in terms of his own normal experience: "He will lose breath—and heart—in search and investigation. The ladies, whose nature is nearer to that of the deity, take no such trouble, they see the relation between the cosmos and the Creator quite plainly as a love affair. And in a love affair search and investigation is an absurdity, and unseemly." It turns out that we have in fact lost breath and heart by coming to the conclusion that because she is something of a charlatan her art cannot really be divine, since—from her point of view—our conclusion is simply an unwitting tribute to her divinity: "To my mind," says her most eloquent spokesman, the self-styled Cardinal in "The Deluge at Norderney," "there never was a great artist who was not a bit of a charlatan, nor a great king, nor a god. The quality of charlatanry is indispensable in a court, or a theater, or in paradise. Thunder and lightning, the new moon, a nightingale, a young girl—all those are bits of charlatanry, of a divine swank." In short, just when we think we have had her, we discover that it is she who has had us. Her stories, for all their air of being innocent

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period pieces, are booby traps for the reader who thinks himself clever enough to look beneath their decorative surface in the spirit of search and investigation . . . absurd and unseemly behavior for which she makes a fool of him. And the very joke is another sign of her divinity. "I love a joke," she observed to an interviewer for the *Paris Review,* "I love the humorous," and this is because, as we shall see in a moment, she holds the divine view of creation to be essentially comic. Her God is very unlike the solemn and Sunday being we are accustomed to. Not only is he a bit of a charlatan, he is also very much of a joker. "The Lord likes a jest," remarks Pellegrina Leoni in "Echoes"; and, as he comes to the end of his tale, Mira Jama, the story-teller in "The Dreamers," says, "I have been trying for a long time to understand God. Now I have made friends with him. To love him truly you must love change, and you must love a joke, these being the true inclinations of his own heart."

So it may be that she has indeed recreated the story as divine art—that is, if her premises are to be taken seriously. But how seriously are they to be taken? She has such a pronounced taste for mockery that this is a very difficult question to answer, but we can at any rate be sure of one thing. However fanciful her esthetics and her theology may be, however much or however little she may really believe in them, they serve her to explore what, with deep and evident seriousness, she feels to be the central problem of human existence: how do we face destiny in a world we can only make sense of by supposing it, either literally or metaphorically, to be in the hands of a capricious and frolicsome God?

There is the way of the bourgeois, who fears the unpredictable, who aims to eliminate it and with his systems and methods and sciences to make life secure, orderly and comfortable. This is the modern Western way, which is forlorn, even stupid, in the face of God's "terrifying fancifulness." Dinesen came to sense its shortcomings by observing the native squatters on her farm, who were "in life itself within their own element, such as we can never be, like fishes in deep water which for the life of them cannot understand our fear of drowning." This admirable quality was born of their rapport with destiny: "The Kikuyu are adjusted for the unforeseen and accustomed to the unexpected. Here they differ from the white men, of whom the majority strive to insure themselves against the unknown and the assaults of fate. The Negro

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is on friendly terms with destiny, having been in her hands all the time; she is to him, in a way, his home, the familiar darkness of the hut, deep mould for his roots. He faces any change in life with great calm."

Then there is the noble way, which embraces this sense of destiny, understands that life must accordingly be tragic and accepts it uncomplainingly as such. "The true aristocracy and the true proletariat of the world are both in understanding with tragedy. To them it is the fundamental principle of God, and the key—the minor key—to existence. They differ in this way from the bourgeoisie of all classes, who deny tragedy, who will not tolerate it, and to whom the word of tragedy means in itself unpleasantness."

And finally there is the divine view, which only a few mortals—the true elite—can reach and sustain: it goes beyond tragedy and sees the universe as comic, not "funny" indeed, but comic in an ironic sense which subsumes tragedy and makes it ultimately understandable. This is nowhere better expressed than in "Sorrow Acre," a story set in eighteenth-century Denmark. The events are seen mainly through the eyes of a young man, whose name is (significantly) Adam and who is imbued with the new humanitarian ideas of the day. His uncle, a nobleman of the old regime who is identified (with equal significance) only as "the old Lord," has offered to withdraw charges of arson against the only son of an elderly widow, one of his tenants, if in one day she can mow a field of rye which is normally three days' mowing for a man. She accepts, performs the task on a burning and sultry day, and dies as she completes it. The situation, repugnant to Adam's democratic notions, provokes a discussion between the two, in the course of which Adam has occasion to observe that tragedy is a noble, even a divine phenomenon.

> "Aye," said his Uncle solemnly, "a noble phenomenon, the noblest on earth. But of the earth only, and never divine. Tragedy is the privilege of man, his highest privilege. The God of the Christian Church himself, when he wished to experience tragedy, had to assume human form. And even at that," he added thoughtfully, "the tragedy was not wholly valid, as it would have become had the hero of it been, in very truth, a man. The divinity of Christ conveyed to it a divine note, the moment of comedy. The real tragic part, by the nature of things there, fell to the executioners, not to the victim. Nay, my nephew, we should not adulterate the pure elements of

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the cosmos. Tragedy should remain the right of human beings, subject, in their conditions or in their own nature, to the dire law of necessity. To them it is salvation and beatification. But the Gods, whom we must believe to be unacquainted with, and incomprehensive of, necessity, can have no knowledge of the tragic. When they are brought face to face with it they will, according to my experience, have the good taste and decorum to keep still, and not interfere.

"No," he said after a pause, "the true art of the Gods is the comic. The comic is a condescension of the divine to the world of man, it is the sublime vision, which can not be studied, but must ever be celestially granted. In the comic the Gods see their own being reflected as in a mirror, and while the tragic poet is bound by strict laws, they will allow the comic artists a freedom as unlimited as their own . . .

"And here on earth, too," he went on, "we who stand in lieu of the Gods and have emancipated ourselves from the tyranny of necessity, should leave to our vassals their monopoly of tragedy, and for ourselves accept the comic with a grace. . . . Indeed," he finished his long speech, "the very same fatality which, in striking the burgher or peasant will become tragedy, with the aristocrat is exalted to the comic. By the grace and wit of our acceptance hereof our aristocracy is known."

There is a remarkable passage in *Out of Africa* describing how she came to this acceptance in her own life. It was towards the end of her stay in Africa. Two old friends had just died—the aged Kikuyu chief Kinanjui and the Englishman Denys Finch-Hatton, athlete, musician, lover of art, and sportsman—two men who stood for the "old Africa" she loved and admired so much. Her coffee farm, never very prosperous, had steadily been losing money, and the prospect of having to give it up had become correspondingly more menacing. She knew she had to make a decision, but she was confused and tormented. "If I looked in the right place, I reflected, the coherence of things might become clear to me. I must, I thought, get up and look for a sign." And so she walked out of the house and stood a few minutes watching the fowl run about, among them a big white cock. A little chameleon came out of the grass. "The Chameleon stopped up dead at the sight of the cock. He was frightened, but he was at the same time very brave, he planted his feet in the ground, opened his mouth as wide as he possibly could, and, to scare his enemy, in a flash he shot out his club-shaped tongue at the cock. The cock stood for a second as if taken aback, then swiftly and determinately he struck down his beak like a hammer and plucked out the Chameleon's tongue."

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In the next few days it dawned on her that she *had* been given her sign, that the gods she had invoked had indeed answered her: "The powers to which I had cried had stood on my dignity more than I had done myself, and what other answer could they then give? This was clearly not the hour for coddling, and they had chosen to connive at my invocation of it. Great powers had laughed to me, with an echo from the hills to follow the laughter, they had said among the trumpets, among the cocks and Chameleons, Ha, ha!"

She was in fact forced to give up the farm shortly afterwards and return to Europe, a move which meant the desolation of being exiled from what she considered to be her spiritual home. "Everything that you saw made for greatness and freedom and unequalled nobility," she felt, and her waking thought in Africa was always, "Here I am, where I ought to be." For she deemed herself an aristocrat (remember that for her aristocracy was mainly a quality of instinct and temperament, not merely an accident of birth), and in a world otherwise submerged by the grey bourgeois tide, Africa seemed one of the few places where an aristocrat might still contrive to feel at home. Here she had stayed for seventeen years, and now she was being turned out. Yet she knew at heart that even if she had been able to stay, her situation would eventually have become hopeless. This was 1931, and she saw that the old Africa was being crushed beneath the pressures of the twentieth century. The brute fact was, that wherever she lived she would find herself out of tune with the age: as an aristocrat born into a democratic world, she had simply been born too late. This was the existential joke, as it were, which God had played on her and for which he was now saying, "Ha, ha!" This was her fatality, and her code required that she make her aristocracy known by the grace and wit of her acceptance thereof, welcoming it in the spirit of comedy—"gaiety transfiguring all that dread," to use Yeats's phrase—looking God straight in the eye, and returning jest for jest.

How?

By outfacing destiny, by insistently remaining an aristocrat despite the impossible circumstances, not obtusely, but with a fine ironic self-consciousness, always alive to the bizarrerie of her situation.

This was risky. "Where the jest was carried far in its daring and arrogance, sometimes it became pathetic"—she learned that from watching two close and deeply-admired English friends, Denys

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Finch-Hatton and Berkeley Cole. Like herself, they had been born too late in an age too dull, but they had chosen to keep faith with their own aristocratic natures, however much at odds with the twentieth century—Denys with his Elizabethan mentality and temperament, and Berkeley, with the outlook and disposition of a seventeenth-century cavalier. "But," she observed, "to be a wit in the manner of Congreve or Wycherley *en plein vingtième siècle* takes a few more qualities than Congreve or Wycherley themselves had got in them: a glow, grandezza, the wild hope."

It was, she knew, only by being in some way a wit out of season that she could ever attain her own wild hope; it would have to be through the power of her mind, not of her person. In Africa, on her six-thousand acre farm, with its numerous dependents and native squatters to whom she was physician, magistrate and demi-god rolled into one, she had been a Lord of the Manor in an almost feudal sense—an aristocrat in the flesh, as it were. In Europe, where this was impossible, if she wanted to be an aristocrat at all, she would have to be an aristocrat of the imagination, making her domain the gift for story telling she had developed to while away the time when drought enforced long days of idleness on the farm. But a writer who elects to be a wit out of season is liable to become pretentious or quaint or simply tiresome. These were the risks she faced, and it was characteristic of her to elect a path which, in respect to those dangers, was as hazardous as any she could have chosen. In literary terms the jest would be as daring and arrogant as she could make it: she would write Gothic fiction.

So she called her first book *Seven Gothic Tales,* and the titles of the succeeding books—*Winter's Tales, Last Tales, Anecdotes of Destiny*—seem to be deliberately non-committal as if to avoid suggesting any change of intention. For all her tales are essentially Gothic in mode or feeling. There is a generally aristocratic or exotic ambiance; there are handsome but fated heroes, beautiful but melancholy heroines; there are mysterious sins; there is an aura of illicit or perverted sex; there is often a flavor of horror, violence or death; there is an obsession with the grotesque, the unaccountable and the coincidental; and even where the narrative concerns itself with more common matters, there is the constant play of an intensely baroque sensibility.

Now to take such a musty and flyblown genre, to transform it into an elegant embodiment of her own philosophical convictions,

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and to make of it a popular success as well as a *succès d'estime*—that was literary daring of a high order. And there was arrogance to match it both in the substance of those convictions, so antagonistic to our own, and in the way she inveigled us into swallowing them under the guise of innocent entertainment. In fact, her jest was so successful that she contrived not only to avoid looking pathetic in our eyes, but even to make us feel as if we looked rather pathetic in hers. For we are left perpetually uncertain what to make of her departures from probability and frequently nonplussed by a tenuousness of motive (as, for example, in "The Old Chevalier" and "The Roads Round Pisa") which is wiredrawn to the point of sheer obscurity. "Who, then," demands the narrator in one of the *Last Tales,* an ancient beldame who is a storyteller by profession, "Who, then, tells a finer story than any of us? Silence does. And where does one read a deeper tale than upon the most precious book? Upon the blank page." There are many such "blank pages" in Dinesen's fiction: they serve to keep alive the casual reader's sense of her divine inscrutability and they put the careful reader in his place by making him feel there is something he is simply too dense to understand. She could say with one of her heroes, the young writer Charlie Despard, "I have laid a wager with Satan about the soul of my reader, I have marred his path and turned terrors upon him, caused him to ride on the wind and dissolved his substance, and when he waited for light there was darkness."

But it is precisely here, where she is being most godlike in her cavalier treatment of the reader, that she does carry her jest a shade too far, and beneath the mask of divinity, cool and ironic in its detached timelessness, we glimpse an expression which is familar, very human and unmistakably time-bound.

For nothing more readily betokens the specifically modern than an amalgam of irony and deliberate obscurity. Its presence in her work (for whatever reasons of her own and despite the air of eternity she so skilfully conjures up with her designedly unmodish techniques) makes us wonder if she isn't, after all, a good deal closer in thought and temperament to her contemporaries than both she and some of her more bemused admirers would lead us to suppose, and if her suggesting that we might regard her as a kind of latter-day Boccaccio, aloof from the currents of modern literature, isn't perhaps as extravagant as anything in her own fiction.

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Almost every modern writer of any stature is tempted to be intentionally esoteric, or at least "difficult," because he knows that real understanding will come from the happy few and not from the public at large. Now the few may be happy in this situation, but the writer himself seldom is, since nobody really enjoys seeing his audience shrink; his malaise and resentment tend to aggravate the temptation and drive him from mere esotericism into a wilful obscurity which both expresses his contempt for the philistine and helps repair some of the damage alienation does to his ego. Yeats's cultivation of a haughtily cryptic Bardic persona is a classic example of this, but it is extremely common: in one form or another, we see it in Mallarmé and Valéry, Pound and Eliot, Joyce and Faulkner, to mention but a few representative figures. For the same reasons, the writer is prone to radical doubts about the very function and value of the art he practises, which can haunt him and become obsessive in his work to the point of turning art into its own subject matter and the artist into his own hero—Proust is the purest example—and Dinesen's stories betray this obsession repeatedly, in either direct or symbolic terms.

The consequence of this situation is a characteristic double ambiguity. The artist is likely, first, to be ambiguous towards art itself, which at one moment he feels to be the most real of human activities and the most important, at another the most illusory and the most trivial; under one aspect metaphysical revelation, under another mere game. And, second, he is likely to be ambiguous about his own role: is he wise man or joker, priest or entertainer, prophet or charlatan—or is he all these at once? Together, these ambiguous feelings encourage a kind of irony which is typical of our age. The writer, not always consciously perhaps, tries to purge himself of his own uncertainties by transferring them to us, leaving us to some degree in doubt as to how seriously we are supposed to take what he is saying. This perplexity, as in *The Magic Mountain,* can provoke a sharper consciousness of our relation to the writer and hence to his work, which is a normal function of irony. But it can also deaden our awareness by leaving us merely face to face with the author's own perplexity, as in the later Joyce or in Eliot. The notes to *The Waste Land,* for instance, in their heavy-handed mixture of solemn pontification and deadpan clowning, balk our finally knowing how seriously they are to be taken either in themselves or in their relation to the poem.

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This ambiguousness may help convey the belief that in a fragmented age an honest writer cannot commit himself wholly to any certainties, but it also allows him to evade fully defining the significance of that belief by taking refuge in a self-created enigma.

Dinesen employs these ambiguities so assiduously that she puts us in the position of Mrs. Humphry Ward in Max Beerbohm's famous cartoon. The novelist is pictured as a little girl with her uncle Matthew Arnold. He is leaning debonairly against the mantlepiece, gazing down at her with a benevolent and jocular smile, as she demands plaintively, "Why, Uncle Matthew, Oh why will not you be always wholly serious?"

I mentioned *The Magic Mountain* because in its refusal ever to be wholly serious it reminds us of Dinesen's fiction—but there is an instructive difference. Mann felt that his business as a writer was not so much to purvey "truth" as to show the living interaction of different and often conflicting ideas; by playing with his readers he hoped to tease them into a mood of contemplation as ironically dispassionate as his own, and in this respect he and Dinesen are very much alike. However, although we may never be quite sure how serious Mann is about any particular view, we do know that he takes seriously the general ideas which are the objects of his ironic play—in this case, ideas about the relation of East to West, of emotion to intellect, of sickness to health, of death to life, and so on. But Dinesen is so continuously and pervasively ironic that we cannot be sure of even that much. We know she is in earnest about the problem of human destiny, but we do not know how much she is in earnest about the terms she uses to work the problem out, namely, those exotic views of God and the aristocracy which her stories inculcate so deftly and for which *Out of Africa* and *Shadows on the Grass* so tactfully elicit our sympathy. For in an age of total war and concentration camps, a philosophy whose ultimate wisdom was to look on human tragedy as a divine joke would not only be anachronistic but repulsive, and she was far too perspicacious to be unaware of that.

The fact is that Dinesen's ideas are rather like Dickens' characters: intensely real in the world their maker creates for them and almost equally unreal out of it, unreal not because they are irrelevant to life but because their relevance is mythical rather than naturalistic. Mr. Micawber is an unequalled personification

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of the self-deluding optimist, but we would no more expect to meet him on the street than Humpty Dumpty. Likewise, the elite envisioned by Dinesen is a highly symbolic and romantic creation (in some ways even sentimental, although the sentimentality is obscured by her wit and urbanity) and its relation to the world of everyday conduct is very oblique. Her aristophilia and her whimsical theology honor some virtues not currently in fashion and provoke us to call certain democratic complacencies into question, but the truth they embody is psychological rather than directly ethical. They remind us that in the free play of fantasy and invention there is a reality our rather grimly utilitarian view of the imagination makes us lose sight of. And that is where her essential achievement lies.

The strength of her appeal, as I have said, is in her narrative inventiveness, in her remarkable ability to arouse and gratify our curiosity and our sense of wonder; but the unique fascination of her work is in the subtle and elusive mockery of her attitudes and in her brilliant juggling of extravagant situations and ideas. Her "truth" lies not in these things themselves, but in the lambent and shimmering elegance of the pattern she creates with them.

And by an irony she would certainly have been the first to appreciate, Dinesen—the uncompromising advocate of the age-old—could now be considered the very *avant-garde* of the *avant-garde*. For nowadays so much is made of the absurd in art (most of it, alas! so dismally labored) and she is the true and incomparable virtuoso of absurdity. When the Cardinal in "The Deluge at Norderney" (an impostor, but a great artist in his impostures) reflects on God's courage in creating the universe, he exclaims: "What an overwhelming lesson to all artists! Be not afraid of absurdity; do not shrink from the fantastic. Within a dilemma, choose the most unheard-of, the most dangerous solution. Be brave, be brave!" Dinesen was indeed brave. She had the courage of the Cardinal's convictions and, in an unpropitious age, created an absurd and fantastic world which would have been a credit to her own wayward God.

In one of her stories, she reminds us that "a name is a reality," and perhaps we had better not forget this as we read her. For she assuredly had her own reality in mind when she chose to write under the name of "Isak."

It means "laughter."

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CHARLES TOMLINSON

Seven Mexican Poems

THE OAXACA BUS

Fiat Voluntas Tua:
over the head of the driver
an altar. No end to it,
the beginning seems to be
Our Lady of Solitude
blessing the crowd
out of a double frame—
gilt and green. Dark
mother by light,
her neighbour, the Guadalupe Virgin
is tucked away under the right-
hand edge as if
to make sure
twice over and (left)
are the legs of a protruding
post-card crucifixion
mothered by both. A cosmos
proliferates outwards
from this mystery, starts
with the minute, twin
sombreros dangling there, each
with embroidered brims
and a blood-red cord
circling the crown of each.
The driving mirror
catches their reflection, carries on
the miraculous composition
with two names—serifs
and flourishes—: *Maria,*
Eugenia: both
inscribed on the glass and
flanked on either end
by rampant rockets

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torpedoing moonwards. Again
on either side,
an artificial vine
twines down: it is tied
to rails in the aisle
and, on it, flower—
are they nasturtiums? They are
pink like the bathing dresses
of the cut-out belles
it passes in descending,
their petals are pleated
like the green
of the fringed curtain that borders the windshield,
they are lilies
of the field of Mexico,
plastic godsend,
last flourish
of that first *Fiat* from sister goddesses
and (yes)
the end . . .

ON THE TLACOLULA BUS

On the Tlacolula bus
'I flew for the Fuehrer'
it says: *Yo volé*
para el Fuehrer signed
Lukenbac in Gothic.
The Fuehrer is dead and Lukenbac
does not drive today:
instead, a Mexican with the brown
face of a Mayan
is in his place and under
a sign *No distraer*
al Operador is
chatting across his shoulder.
Would Lukenbac? And does he
care for this country, or long
for a land of hygiene and Christmas trees
where he would not dare

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write up his boast in Gothic?
As we swing
out of the market square
a goat on a string
being led by someone
stops, stands and while
the bus passes by
into history, turns
on the succession of windows
its narrow stare, looking
like Lukenbac in exile.

THE WELL: *in a Mexican convent*

Leaning on
the parapet stone
Listening down
the long, dark
sheath through which the standing
shaft of water
sends its echoings up
Catching, as it stirs
the steady seethings
that mount and mingle
with surrounding sounds
from the neighbouring
barrack-yard: soldiery
—heirs, no doubt
of the gunnery that gashed
these walls of tattered
frescoes, the bullet-
holes now socketed
deeper by sunlight
and the bright gaps
giving on to the square
and there revealing
strollers in khaki
with their girls Aware
of a well-like
cool throughout

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the entire, clear
sunlit ruin,
of the brilliant Cupids
above the cistern
that hold up
a baldachin of stone
which is not there
Hearing the tide
of insurrection
subside through time
under the still-
painted slogans
Hemos servido
lealmente
la revolución

CONSTITUTION DAY

Subject for Eisenstein
but in reversion:
proletariat
flowing in cinematic streams
all going the wrong way
to pray
to the Dark Virgin of Tepeyac hill.

Ablaze
in his laundered white
an adolescent recites
a poem on the Constitution
and, *Juarez, Madero, Cárdenas*
the names go by
like faces in a fresco
just as Diego
would have painted them. It's all
very bad, but it's a poem.

While the brass band
finger their instruments for another fanfare
—*Juarez, Lopez Mateos*—

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penitents come pouring in
to the gold interior and effigy,
deaf to the Day and seeking
the promise of a more than human mercy.

The committee
platformed behind the spouting child
are quite the best-
dressed Mexicans I have seen,
perched high beyond the doom
of the ragged rest—
of God's desolate mother, Eisenstein
dead of a weakened heart
and Stalin rifled from his tomb.

THE BOOTBLACK

What does he think about
down there? His hair is immaculate
and all that I can glimpse
save for a pair of hands
in a mess of turpentine, the back
thin, its twin shoulder-blades
rucking the shirt. What does he see?
Does he see me? Or the penitents
behind him, crossing the plaza
by the Basilica de Guadalupe
and climbing
up into the shrine
taking the steps on shuffled knees?
It's Constitution Day.
Does he care? Does he hear
the processions of bobbing straw sombreros
on sandalled feet
liquid-footed as sheep
feeding the city from the villages?
Ask your questions, and they
reply with smiles you cannot interpret.
He has done
spreading the stain

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from naked fingers, has put on
the shine. I say: 'The shoes
are fit for a king.' And he smiles.
Will he be
angry or mirthful when he
inherits the earth?

Mexico City

THEORY OF REGRESS

Seven bulls of a Sunday:
corrida for the crowd, carcasses
for the penitentiary. *And you descend*
said Artaud, *to this*
when you began
with human
sacrifice?

IN MICHOACÁN

A poor church
but an obstinate devotion
had filled it
with flowers.

What power drew
those flower-fraught Indians down
by narrow trails
no one knew

Until the earthquake:
after it, the altar
split wide open
like a hell-mouth,

And inside the wreck
there sat
its guardian idol:
squat, smiling, Aztec.

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ALAN FRIEDMAN

The Stream of Conscience as a Form in Fiction

INNOCENCE IN THE NOVEL IS APT TO BE SLIPPERY: let me quote from the most innocent fiction I know.

> A tall man of 29 rose from the sofa. He was rarther bent in the middle with very nice long legs fairish hair and blue eyes. Hullo Alf old boy he cried so you have got here all safe and no limbs broken.
>
> None thankyou Bernard replied Mr Salteena shaking hands and let me introduce Miss Monticue she is very pleased to come for this visit. Oh yes gasped Ethel blushing through her red ruge. Bernard looked at her keenly and turned a dark red.

The bashful specimen comes from *The Young Visiters,* misspelled and composed by Daisy Ashford at the age of nine.[1] Unquestionably, the book is some sort of masterpiece: it has a brilliantly managed, complex and unified plot, a broad and sensitively rendered social milieu, a large number of astonishingly varied and vividly realized characters, a luxuriant surface of sensuous and material details integral to the psychological moment, technically admirable suspense and a firmly controlled point of view, incisive insight and deep irony, even a final fullness of meaning . . . all filtered through immature spelling and punctuation, and the immature, if not altogether innocent, mind of its author. Written at about the turn of the century and preserved in manuscript —pencilled notebook—until it was published in 1919, it constitutes not only a precocious unconscious parody but also a very reasonable facsimile of the genus Novel for the first two centuries of its existence. Perhaps it deserves to be honored as the last traditional novel, the *reductio ad absurdum* which looks backward, as Joyce's looks forward. Forward or backward, nowhere else can we learn so easily what we want to know about the genre as a whole. *The Young Visiters* reveals everything: it is utterly defenseless.

[1] Daisy Ashford, *The Young Visiters* (London, 1919). The various passages given here are quoted from the first fifty pages of the London, 1960, edition.

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Well said Mr Salteena lapping up his turtle soup you have a very sumpshous house Bernard.

His friend gave a weary smile and swollowed a few drops of sherry wine. It is fairly decent he replied with a bashful glance at Ethel after our repast I will show you over the premisis.

Many thanks said Mr Salteena getting rarther flustered with his forks.

You ourght to give a ball remarked Ethel you have such large compartments.

Yes there is room enough sighed Bernard we might try a few steps and meanwhile I might get to know a few peaple.

So you might responded Ethel giving him a speaking look.

As the excerpts suggest, Daisy Ashford's novel, like all novels, is about morals, manners, marriage, money, and movement. And its movement begins in innocence.

. . . she ran out of the room with a very superior run throwing out her legs behind and her arms swinging in rithum.

Well said the owner of the house she has a most idiotick run.

Mr S. skipped upstairs to Rosalinds room. Good-bye Rosalind he said I shall be back soon and I hope I shall enjoy myself.

I make no doubt of that sir said Rosalind with a blush as Mr Salteena silently put 2/6 on the dirty toilet cover.

Whose innocence? That of its tender author, age nine? Or of her creature, Miss Ethel Monticue, age seventeen—"quite a young girl" . . . "who did not really know at all how to go on at a visit," but seems used to "staying" with apparently anyone, Mr. Salteena or Bernard. When after barely thirty-six hours Mr. Salteena departs, leaving young Ethel in Bernard's hands, our child author has him remark solicitously

I do hope Ethel will behave properly.

Oh yes I expect she will said Bernard with a sigh.

And the very next time we see Bernard and Ethel,

I was thinking he said passionately what about going up to London for a weeks Gaierty.

Who inquired Ethel in a low tone.

Clearly *both* heroine and author know what they are up to. And when Bernard and Ethel engage adjoining rooms at London's Gaierty Hotel, lingering doubt vanishes.

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> The best shall be yours then said Bernard bowing gallantly and pointing to the biggest room.
>
> Ethel blushed at his speaking look. I shall be quite lost in that huge bed she added to hide her embarrassment.
>
> Yes I expect you will said Bernard.

If Ethel Monticue is "innocent," the concept allows for a bit of sharp practice and may require some sharp definition.

To bring matters to a sharper, not to say glaring, focus, it may be useful to consider one of the least innocent fictions and one of the earliest English novels, John Cleland's classically dirty book, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (originally published in 1749, just nine years after Richardson's first effort, *Pamela*). In the opening pages of Cleland's epistolary work, Fanny Hill writes that her "foundation in virtue was no other than a total ignorance of vice, and the shy timidity general to our sex."[2] And although on page 125 she writes that experience "soon stripped me of all the remains of bashfulness and modesty," the intention of this sentence is clearly to remind us that even after one hundred salacious pages she still possesses some remnant of those qualities; after 161 pages, she manages to accept "a proposal which my candor and ingenuity [ingenuousness] gave me some repugnance to"; after 204 pages, she is still protesting, "I had not, however, so thoroughly renounced all innate shame as not to suffer great confusion at the state I saw myself in." And so on.

Now although Fanny Hill's protests, like the blushes of Ethel Monticue and the endless guarantees of Pamela ("don't be frightened—for—I hope—I hope, I am honest!"—Letter XXV), are never entirely credible, all three girls somehow manage to convey *nevertheless* a most unreasonably strong sense of innocence —their pure confusion perhaps about the impure stuff of their experience. Each girl, after all, is never entirely prepared for the next page. Admittedly, Fanny's case is special. Every new scene in *The Memoirs* exposes Fanny to a new "experience." The muck thickens; and it becomes Cleland's problem as a good pornographer to keep before the reader some (slowly crumbling) impression of Fanny's inner purity for purposes of titillation. And yet if we choose our words with greater care, we can say much the same thing about *Pamela* and *The Young Visiters*. No muck, less

[2] John Cleland, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (New York, 1963), p. 30. Subsequent page references are also to the 1963 edition.

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titillation; but each girl, as her innocence crumbles, is forever innocent of what the next chapter holds in store, unready—not quite ready—to interpret it when she arrives, unsure—not quite sure—of how to respond when it happens. Her innocence, if we may call it that, is the frame of mind on which the skein of action is wound.

There are differences of course. Ethel Monticue's innocence, confidently assumed by her author, is gradually and conclusively eroded by her story. Pamela Andrew's innocence must be circumstantially protested and re-propped so that Squire B____ can assault it over and over again. But in both cases, innocence is the necessary tension through which experience moves. And the operation of that fundamental dynamism remains unchanged and essential—if subtler in its range of effects—elsewhere in fiction. Can we say everywhere?

Every central character must, in a sense relative to his story, be relatively innocent at the beginning of his book: must be more innocent earlier in the story than he is later in the story. On this agreement heroes and heroines shake hands: Moll Flanders with Molly Bloom, Joseph Andrews with Joe Christmas, Uncle Toby with Hans Castorp, Becky Sharp with Jane Eyre, Pip with Nick Carroway, Natty Bumppo with Bernard Profitendieu, and for that matter, Lady Chatterley with Alice in Wonderland. To crash the world of fiction successfully, even a murderer, pervert, con-man, or whore must agree to respect at least one convention, the convention of his own innocence—Raskolnikov, Humbert Humbert, Felix Krull, Fanny Hill. The relative innocence of central characters is a truism; what is perhaps only barely less obvious is that "innocence" is a function of the organization of events, and may therefore serve as a very useful source for a theory of the dynamism—the motivation—of narrative form. Innocence establishes the crucial inward perspective in fiction; the process of experience in fiction exerts a reciprocal pressure backwards upon innocence. The result, moment by moment from the character's point of view, is a continuous stream or series of responses—in perception, in action—which constitutes his gradual rendering of himself and his world. Now the intense energizing function of innocence in fiction helps to explain in part why so many great

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novels have had central characters of exceptionally great purity, simplicity, or harmlessness. But with an eye on structure, we can perhaps justifiably lay less stress on any specific traits of character. We can more generally and more usefully define fictional innocence as an inward pressure to interpret experience by responding to it.

For response, whether out of simplicity or subtlety, whether in action or feeling, constitutes interpretation.

> Ethel blushed at his speaking look. I shall be quite lost in that huge bed she added to hide her embarrassment.

We can, after all, imagine other responses than Ethel's blush; and other responses—if we or the author should insist on imagining them—would create other events . . . other characters . . . other stories; in short, another interpretation of experience.

> I screamed out, and fainted away. . . .
>
> When I recovered my senses, I found myself undressed and a-bed, in the arms of the sweet unrelenting murderer of my virginity. . . . (Fanny Hill)

> . . . I sighed and screamed, and fainted away. . . . I knew nothing more of the matter, one fit following another, till about three hours after, as it proved to be, I found myself in bed, and Mrs. Jervis sitting upon one side . . . and no master, for the wicked wretch was gone. But I was so overjoyed, that I hardly could believe myself. . . . (Pamela)

> It was only then that her still face showed the least emotion, a tear or two beginning to trickle down.
>
> "What are you crying for?" he coldly asked.
>
> "I was only thinking that I was born over there," murmured Tess.

Over the long course of a novel, the flux of such responses not only creates or defines character, as it obviously does, but does so through a process which we can isolate: under the pressure of their innocence, characters are obliged to interpret themselves as they interpret a changing experience.

That double interpretative process is the primary imaginative movement in the novel, a movement which is never merely cumulative, never piling experience on inexperience *merely* (as in some earlier narratives, Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller,* for example), but always moving from innocence to experience, from relative unreadiness to relative adequacy. The stream of

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responses, which is a stream of interpretation, is therefore a fundamental moral process in fiction.

Now it is precisely in the moment of not-quite-readiness ("I was only thinking that I was born over there") and under the threats and opportunities of experience, that responses are made, characters are created, interpretations are formed, and fictional events occur. In that incessantly recurring moment and in its necessary momentum toward sophistication may lie a clue to the relation between ethics and events in the novel. We may be able to trace a theory of single events and their unified trajectory which will allow us to establish an anatomy of fictional experience as both narrative structure and ethical form.

Let us consider for a moment the plight of those assaulted servant girls who hold open the doors through which English fiction enters so rudely—Defoe's Moll, Richardson's Pamela, Fielding's Fanny, and Cleland's Fanny. Four very different girls chased by four very different squires: a world of ropes, ponds, hedges, purses, employment agencies, mothers, captains, and justices of the peace. The pell-mell momentum of threat and opportunity, response and interpretation, grows increasingly tense. Squire A_____ tempts Moll with a silk purse and silken promises; Squire B_____ commands lackeys to spirit Pamela away and keep her in an isolated house; Squire C_____ has Fanny Goodwill bound on a horse and abducted as a "rebellious" wife; Squire D_____ has his procuress terrorize Fanny Hill with threats of debtors' prison before he generously pays her rent. Against such harsh and subtle assaults, what sort of chance does innocence stand?

In describing the existence of the novel as a genre, Mark Schorer has spoken of "the intersection of the stream of social history and the stream of soul. This intersection . . . provides the source of those generic tensions that make [the form] possible at all."[3] Can we go further and say that that same intersection provides the source of tension in each individual event by which any given novel achieves its existence? If we can, then we will at least be in a position to understand the remarkable resistance the soul puts up against social history, the sort of chance innocence does in fact stand against the harsh and subtle assaults of squires. But each individual squire immediately and loudly objects: by what

[3] Mark Schorer, "Foreword: Self and Society," *Society and Self in the Novel, English Institute Essays, 1955,* ed. Mark Schorer (New York, 1956), p. ix.

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authority, he demands, do we make a servant girl a soul and himself a fact of social history? But let us overrule him for a moment and side—tentatively—with the harassed girl. From her point of view, the encircling arms of the squire are embarrassingly twofold: the world of impersonal force (social, historical, physical, and natural) and the personal world of character. For squires, lackeys, and lovers, though "selves" like her own self, are from her point of view parts of her world, forces outside her soul with whom she must cope and to whom she must respond. (Our analysis is of course relative to an arbitrarily fixed center; and the moment the squire's protests become persuasive, we can—for his soul—simply reverse our procedure.)

Now in the moment of innocence, when the susceptible squire seizes her about the waist, each girl's responses may also be divided, conveniently, into a dilemma: how to feel about it and what to do about it. And both together inevitably constitute her "interpretation": perception and action. Moll Flanders is often content to count her blessings; Fanny Hill and Fanny Goodwill sometimes cry and kick against the aggressors; Pamela, "sadly vexed," usually contrives to let her affairs drift to the sexual brink. This running interpretation of the heroine's world—the current of small outcomes all along the way—finds its energy, it is true, in a limitlessly complex and dynamic interaction of self and world: the full inner and outer experience of fiction. But if we divide that experience—abstractly—into an onrushing double response of the Self (insight and deeds) to the onrushing double trouble of the World (personal and impersonal), we have at least a coherent and consistent analysis that can account for any given event in terms of the tensions between individual innocence and the onslaught of history and society: blushes and wishes; captains and employment agencies. By including within the term "World" not only society and history but everything "not-Self," we can even account for the circumstantial detail of events, the physical and natural texture: ropes, ponds, and hedges.

If the fundamental unit of language is the word, and the fundamental unit of discursive prose is the assertion, then it seems reasonable to suggest that the fundamental unit of fiction is the event. But what is a "single" event? We turn the page. The event isn't over: it has refused to sign a treaty over boundaries, refused to

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stay "single," not even when the chapter closes on it. It doesn't close: just as it has incorporated within itself smaller events, it contains within itself potentialities for further events which inexorably incorporate it, and it is alive only in the stream. By looking at events as an onrushing confrontation (of tensions contained internally in character, externally in the world), we sacrifice something—the convenience of considering events as closed "units" in a separable "construction"—but we come closer to a dynamic and true sense of structure in the novel. For it is in some such way that we do read fiction: at some moments more aware of the force and flow of the stream; at other moments more aware of the single and particular event—we pause in acknowledgement, we know that it has occurred. If we can agree that the event is the fundamental unit of fiction, then we should agree to go further and say that the stream of events is the fundamental form of fiction.

The fundamental unit of fiction, "one" event, might then perhaps be formally defined as the dynamic confrontation of two pressures, Self and World, which issues in any clear outcome—whether in perception or action or both, whether on the part of the Self, the World, or both.[4] Several provisos and amplifications follow.

Of course the definition obliges us in the first place to choose arbitrarily, but not injudiciously, one character as the center or focus of any event and to regard that character as the continuous inward center for the duration of any sequence of events. If we regard as inward whatever parts of the narrative pertain to him as a Self—his perception, feeling, action, and so on—then *everything* else can be considered as outward, that is to say, as *that* character's world—including, most notably, other characters. The pressures

[4] Compare the following definitions: "The unit of fiction is the event. . . . We may define a fictional event as the representation in language of any psychic or psychological phenomenon which is observed as a process rather than as an entity": Marvin Mudrick, "Character and Event in Fiction," *Yale Review,* L (Winter, 1961), pp. 210 and 207. (The two passages have been excerpted in reversed order.) "The surface of a novel is made up of items concretely represented and temporally arranged (the temporal arrangement includes plot and other kinds of pattern), enabling us to perceive the immediately felt qualities of a human "world," experiences in the imagination, not through any one sense": Joseph E. Baker, "Aesthetic Surface in the Novel," *The Trollopian,* II (September, 1947), p. 98. "Most novels develop their meaning through a communication to the reader of the imagined adventures (psychological and physical, occasionally only one or the other of these two kinds) of imaginary characters": David Daiches, "Problems for Modern Novelists," in *Accent Anthology,* (New York, 1946), p. 549.

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exerted upon him by the world (in this relative analysis) can then include, for example, the pressures of other characters' perceptions, feelings, words, intentions, and actions; of social institutions and conventions; of physical and natural forces—soft chairs, open doors, bad weather, snapping twigs, falling rocks.

Now, in the second place, it is in the nature of fiction as a stream or a process that any inner-and-outer happening which strikes us as an outcome will normally also be, with respect to the next event, an inception. That is, any new relation of Self to World which we *call* an outcome either becomes *part* (if new stresses are introduced) or constitutes *all* of the two new pressures of Self and World which produce the outcome of the next continuous event.

Third, thanks to a definition by now absolutely rapacious, everything has become grist to our mill of events: everything from the discernible but trivial ripple of a single incident to the strong but indistinguishable eddying of many incidents; even such stubbornly irreducible shoals and islands in fiction's flow as long landscapes or detailed interiors, summaries of the past or character analysis, expository meditation or the stream of consciousness; all of necessity become the background, the potential energy, inward or outward, for the succession of outcomes which establishes the stream.

Looked at in this way, therefore, an event is not only "what happens"—though, heaven knows, if we call it anything else, we are obligated to show what blessings will eventually flow from our sophistication. An event is a moment in that momentum out of innocence which creates for us the inward self and the process by which it consciously copes with and interprets the world—other selves, social institutions, conventions, values, sometimes nature itself. But to say *that* is to say that the novel structures the specific and essentially moral process of which the human imagination is capable, structures it in the full substance of narrative.[5] The nar-

[5] Compare Lionel Trilling's emphasis: "For our time the most effective agent of the moral imagination has been the novel of the last two hundred years. It was never, either aesthetically or morally, a perfect form and its faults and failures can be quickly enumerated. But its greatness and its practical usefulness lay in its unremitting work of involving the reader himself in the moral life, inviting him to put his own motives under examination, suggesting that reality is not as his conventional education has led him to see it. It taught us, as no other genre ever did, the extent of human variety and the value of this variety. It was the literary form to which the emotions of understanding and forgiveness were indigenous, as if by definition of the form itself." "Manners, Morals, and the Novel," *The Liberal Imagination* (London, 1951), p. 222.

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rative of events in the novel, then, by its obligatory attention to the perceiving self, is also obliged (whether in accord with or even against the novelist's will) to create an ethical form in process. The stream of events may therefore (but again, not against our will) be studied as a process of the conscience: we can grasp the perceiving self's attempts to grasp the assaults and offers of the surrounding world. Without changing the terms of our earlier definition of an event, but concentrating on the self's responses as developing and related interpretations, we can regard that peculiarly novelistic continuum, the inner-and-outer dialectics of the novel, event by event, under the aspect of an ethical form. We have already suggested that with respect to structure the fundamental form of fiction is the stream of events. With respect to meaning, it seems reasonable to suggest that the fundamental form of the novel is its stream of conscience.

That is what we read novels for: to share in creating the experience of one more world of selves, and one more, and one more. This may seem hardly a process of the conscience. But the novelist arranges in advance the rules of play (style and ethics; time and pace) and the reader, with all the energy of his imagination, plays the book as his experience. Instead of a "willing suspension of disbelief" before the unreality of the theater stage, the cooperative reader submits to (the novel produces) another kind of suspension, which we regularly call identification—a suspension of dissociation before the intrusion of personality. An "other" becomes our temporary self. More precisely, others become our temporary selves, one after another, and we experience the fiction not from orchestra or balcony but from some center of the novel's world, through the temporary peephole of character, moving from innocence to experience with the subjective wedge that opens the future of narrative motion.

In that way the stream of events in the novel, just as we have described it, becomes the experience of the reader: Self and World become our self and surrounding world—so that the experience of reading a novel comes closer than does that of any other form of literature to our personal experience in time. The fundamental form of fiction, the stream of conscience, in-forms the reader's Self, and as a result consistent patterns of moral and emotional response in the novels of an era can and do take on the impact and authority of mythic information.

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FREDERIC MORTON

The Guest

WHEN I WAS ELEVEN I HAD A TEACHER, a crotchety white-mustached one, who used to say, "Austria was an oak. Now it's a little violet in the middle of Europe, and somebody is going to come along and pluck it, and smell it a little, and throw it into the river."

Every Wednesday that year the Daimler picked me up after school, and when it released me soon afterwards my teacher's mustache always moved across my mind. For the city around me, the Vienna of 1938, was drowning in the shadow of the apartment-house entrance where my aunt's maid stood. Everything changed, including myself. I was never called by my own name.

"The Guest!" exclaimed Rosa, the maid. She always munched an almond cookie. Her bosom shook with laughter against the tips of her blond braids. "Look at him!" She pushed my hair into my face. "He didn't get enough of our place the last time. He wants more yet! That Guest!"

The phrase sent into my blood a defensive energy which did not subside until the afternoon was over. I tried to yank her braids but was uproariously repulsed. She poked her thumbs into my ribs, stinging, tickling. We skirmished under the double-tongued gargoyles along the lobby. "Race?" she would say. The lift gate clanged shut behind her. I ran up a snow-white desert of marble stairs while the lift, a dark grillworked monster, pursued me in silence.

I always won the race by a few heartbeats. In jovial anger Rosa pushed me into the apartment. My body still glowed as I walked through the baroque twilight of the vestibule. I let my breath heave out against it. I passed my uncle's waiting room. It was a dim, temple-like place. Some man always sat on a high-backed chair, one knee folded closely over the other, his bald head dipped into a magazine. It seemed to be the same person, the same stance, week after week. I came to think of him as a kind of Flying Dutchman patient, condemned to wait there until, at Judgement

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Day, the trumpets would sound, the angels chant, and my uncle open the door to his office, saying, "Next."

My aunt's room was different. Because I had been told to enter without knocking, it seemed surprised, defenseless. The orange orchids on the wallpaper shivered with hothouse translucency. The thin brass legs of her bed reached down to the parquet floor in tapering darts but appeared hardly to touch it at all. "Good day, Aunt Elsa," I said, coming nearer.

She always slept on her side, her hair spread against the pillow like a black fan, her small eagle-nosed profile extended vulnerably to the slant of the sun. Her eyes opened instantly, no matter how softly I spoke. They were of a dark-brown fretful beauty and never seemed the least bit sleep-blurred. They seemed to have kept vigil beneath the closed lids.

Then her arms arched from the sheets. Her face creased and gleamed into alertness, as if trying to recognize a long expected fear. But then her mind caught up with her wide-awake eyes. "Oh, my Guest." She smiled. She never kissed me. She took the small bouquet I had bought—I had a special allowance for that purpose.

"How quite lovely."

There was a careful, almost sardonic formality in all her words. Yet both her hands closed round the flowers with a naive possessiveness and drew them to the blue lace of her breast.

"Will my Guest draw the blinds?"

I did, though this was the top floor and nobody could look in. Only after the room had sunk to semi-darkness would she release the flowers and let me put them in the Venetian glass vase by her bedside. "You haven't had tea *outside,* have you, Guest?" she said, half rising out of the coverlet as if the accented word pulled at her brutally. "You haven't betrayed me?"

" 'course not." I protected myself with jauntiness.

"Good," she said. "We'll reward such loyalty." And she fell back in victorious and just slightly sarcastic fatigue.

Theoretically I was supposed to do homework while she dressed. But I could not bear the silence in her sitting room. No sound reached there, not even the ubiquitous tinkling of the Viennese streetcars. And it always seemed that it wasn't the apartment's top-floor remoteness which fended off the city, but that the silence itself was a hungry animal, an invisible octopus which ate clangings,

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wolfed down whistles, strangled screeches. Huge potted ferns guarded the window. A green dusk flowed from them, and a special hush of their own.

I threw myself into the rocking chair behind the table. I fought back with a barrage of creaks. But the picture on the wall fought back at *me*. It was the photograph of a boy in his teens, with black hair and a short puzzled upper lip. He was Aunt Elsa's son, or rather had been, for whenever I asked my parents about him I was told he was "no longer with us." I was not to mention him in my aunt's presence. This boy was portrayed steadying himself with one hand against a desk as he leaned forward into some fascinating void. His black, magnetized, uncomprehending eyes seized on my slightest motion as I rocked. He compounded the unreality of the room's silence. His rigid black pupils overwhelmed the sensible creaks of my chair. I stormed into the kitchen.

And Rosa was ready for me at the entrance. Her mouth munched. Her left hand was poised over the cookie bowl for the next piece. "Well, look at him," she said, chewing. "Coming down on me like a savage!"

"I am hungry," I announced for some namelessly urgent reason.

"Hungry? His Highness, the Guest, will wait for tea if he doesn't mind."

"Give me a cookie," I shouted and squared off against her.

But her determination grew with mine. "Aren't you a greedy Guest?" she jeered. "Aren't you all a greedy bunch?"

I grabbed a cookie and she crushed it in my palm and we both snatched at the falling crumbs, laughing. She was a large strong woman, and her munching mouth would distort itself in brutal satisfaction. Yet somehow that was just where I wanted to take shelter, in the swoop of her relentless health. I chafed up against it. We giggled and grappled until the three-tone doorbell sounded. It signified the departure of my uncle's nurse. His office hours were over. I had to hurry back.

I arrived in the sitting room just as my uncle entered it from the other side with my aunt on his arm. It wasn't a specific limp which impeded her gait, but a general lassitude. Under the long dark-flowered dress her small pumps gestured like toys wound with weak springs. My uncle was dressed in a silky alpaca jacket

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and a stiff collar, the old-fashioned mufti of the physician. A biblical beard thundered down from his cheeks, but his eyes always opened wide with shy solicitude, his breath came quick and audible, and he looked as though he were constantly trying to summon courage to tell me to please wash fruit before eating it. But he never did. He said, "Why, I do believe that's our Guest. Hello!"

When we were all seated, my aunt reached for the sewing cabinet hidden under the table. She pulled out an unfinished sweater of orange-and-black design and started knitting instantly. At first she would do this with a certain furtiveness, the needles quivering like antennae, her palms doing tiny flutters so that the two hands looked like a trapped butterfly. Her voice, however, retained its impeccability.

"Shall we entertain our Guest?"

That was a cue for my uncle to go to the radio.

"Put on Strasbourg," my aunt said. "It is the only decent German-speaking station." And that was a signal for me to bring the Chinese Checkers board from the mantel shelf.

It was the most remarkable Chinese Checkers board I had ever seen. To begin with, it had a huge monogram in the middle, a mysterious thing, for it said SG while my uncle's and aunt's initials were EG or HG. Then, like the sweater Aunt Elsa knitted, the board was always in a state of evolution. The game we had broken off last week still raged on it from rim to rim in suspended animation. Finally (and again like the sweater) it was illustrated in orange and black with Oriental opulence. Dragons yawned, mandarins brooded, bridges curved, lovers lisped and pagodas loomed. I bore this universe with caution.

I am not certain why I always became more reconciled to the peculiar private silence of the apartment after I had put down that board and we started playing. Possibly it was the rhythm of the game itself, possibly because my aunt's knitting became more serene. The butterfly on the sweater was no longer trapped, but flew on with slow steady wings. The music of the symphony hour at Strasbourg arranged itself through the room, ornamenting but not affecting the quiet. When it was my aunt's turn, her fingers would forsake the needles for a moment. She'd jump her pawn across an enemy phalanx (she was a skillful player), saying, "Par-

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don me for being opportunistic," before resuming work. As my uncle made a move he murmured, embarrassedly, "Here is an opening, I do believe." And when I had a chance to jump I liked to whack the opposing pawns a little on the head. And then it was my aunt's turn again. And the symphony swarmed and the butterfly flew, and it seemed as though my aunt were not only knitting a sweater but weaving us all into a huge strange design which receded even as it grew, as if we all became dwindling curlicued extensions of the orange-black sweater pattern and the orange-black landscape of the checker board, as if we were all turning into exquisite and far-off tapestry, and looked at ourselves through a telescope.

Then Rosa came in with the tea things, and the design was broken by the thump her foot made as she pushed open the door. My aunt concealed the sweater swiftly in the sewing cabinet under the table. She took the checker board as she had grasped the flowers, naively and tenderly, and carried the game to the safety of the mantel shelf. There it would ossify for another seven days in a stance of surprised interruption. Then she sat down, fingers tightly interlaced, immobile, looking like her own effigy.

Meanwhile Rosa laid the table. She was a different Rosa. A white cap stuck out of her hair and she conducted herself with almost exaggerated docility. The teacups clinked neatly as she set them down. Her head inclined in a humble angle when she asked, did the Herr Doktor want his cognac now? But when she passed behind my aunt's back, her mouth gave a giant lightning-fast munch as a token to me that underneath she was still the same and still thought we were all a greedy bunch.

My aunt didn't move after Rosa had gone. Uncle Hugo lifted the cognac glass, said, "I'm afraid she poured a bit too much," and drank it down after a suitable hesitation. My aunt still didn't stir, and so my uncle took off the lid from the covered silver dish, exclaiming, "What?" I, too, would go through the motions of astonishment. As usual, the dish held crescents, buns, rolls, all the size of cufflinks. "Small morsels for small Guests, I do believe," my uncle said, continuing to address me but glancing at my aunt to see if he was doing so properly. "How odd!"

"Well, eat your oddities," my aunt would say.

We did. Only it was most difficult, spreading butter and jam on

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these tiny things. I smeared my sleeve, and my uncle's patriarchal visage groaned over a miniature *semmel*. My aunt watched us with a growing yet pleased impatience. Gradually her hands unlaced.

"Permit me, gentlemen."

The butter knife glinted in her hand. It danced over bun and crescent. It split, it spread. It transferred its burden to the fork which offered to our mouths the finished delicacy, rimmed golden with butter, mined with jam. She fork-fed me, the eleven-year-old, him the bearded doctor. "There . . ." she said, "there . . . that makes it simpler." It was strange but not incongruous, for it was another way of playing on the checker board or knitting the sweater. And the music tided and a lock fell busy and black onto my aunt's forehead. "There . . . there . . ." And the design grew and swallowed us into a part of itself and drugged me into its rhythm.

Then the music stopped.

The Strasbourg news broadcast came on in queer Alsatian German. My aunt dropped the knife and interlaced her fingers. My uncle rose. He almost reached the set.

"Leave it," Aunt Elsa said with thin lips. "We might as well hear it to the end."

Now the design shattered beyond repairing. The outside world stampeded through the room with each new bulletin. My aunt endured it and took short sips of tea. After the news was over, she turned the set off herself.

"So another little speech was made in Berlin," she said, returning to her seat.

"Dear, it is a question of interpretation," my uncle said.

"In two years they will be here, on top of us," my aunt said offhand.

"My dear, the rest of the world won't permit—"

"The rest of the world? The rest of the pack won't permit the wolf?"

"You oughtn't upset yourself."

"Not at all," my aunt said in chill contentment. "It is good to know where to make one's last stand."

After these words my uncle fumbled in his vest pocket, extricated a small brown cigar and laid it in front of him on the

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table. "My dear," he said, gingerly stroking the cigar, "I do believe—"

But my aunt's eyes had fastened on me.

"She made you race the elevator," she said uncannily.

"I . . . a little," I stammered.

"Of course." She looked challengingly at my uncle. "He is still heated up."

My uncle laid an earnest, hairy finger on my wrist.

"She got him to do it. I've asked her a dozen times."

"His pulse is normal now," my uncle said.

"He hasn't built his mental defense against them yet," my aunt said. "They—"

She froze because, talk of the devil, Rosa entered the room. She cleared the table. She was quick and quiet and didn't give me a munch. But her tongue peeped just the slightest bit beyond her teeth. My aunt's hands interlaced, she didn't seem to see her.

"And how is my Guest's English?" she asked as soon as the girl was gone.

"My English?" I said. I was taking Latin at the *Gymnasium*. My last *Miss* had been driven away two years ago by my habit of playing soccer in her room.

"I told your father that the only safe spot may be Australia—but who listens to Cassandra's rantings?"

"Of course he remembers his English," my uncle said, stroking his cigar. "You sang a pretty song last time."

"Oh," I said. "Shall I do that one again?"

"If you please," my aunt said, "practice."

And so I got up and put my feet together and let my arms hang straight down my sides the way I did in class when reciting Goethe. Making my voice thin and phlegmatic, as I imagined Englishmen's voices to be, I sang:

My bonnie lies over the ocean, my bonnie lies over the sea,
My bonnie lies over the ocean, oh bring back my bonnie to me.

Not long afterwards we would sit in the Daimler, all three of us. Its curtains were drawn, but my aunt was tensed between my uncle and me, her arms linked into ours as if we were promenading through a hostile crowd. My uncle was dropped off first at his hos-

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pital. My aunt disembarked on the adjacent street. I kissed the hand she held out to me. Her fingers were cool and smooth against my lips, like candles. I would watch her enter a candy shop and emerge with a big candy bar wrapped in orange paper. She carried a cane and forged forward with the absorbed steady boldness of someone blind, and disappeared into a medical-looking building.

The ceremony of my visit remained the same for many months. I was relinquished to the Daimler on Wednesday afternoon much as I was dispatched to the Hebrew professor Thursday evenings—out of a furtive traditional reflex. And my sojourns at Aunt Elsa's were never discussed at home until one day in the summer of 1939. By that time Austria, the plucked little flower, *had* been thrown away. Yet the change at my aunt's apparently went so far beyond anything happening to us, that my parents spent a long while behind a locked door before deciding to let me go once more, to say goodbye.

On that day Rosa didn't meet me. She had announced that she had a Party Member fiance and vanished after baking herself three cartons of almond cookies and leaving the dishes unwashed in the sink. The elevator didn't budge, wasn't permitted to, legally, for such as us. The living room, the consultation office and the waiting room had been walled off from the apartment and now belonged to the physician next door.

My uncle himself had taken over Rosa's role. A rough brown apron covered his alpaca coat to pinch the lower reaches of his beard. "The Guest!" he said. He led me to the sitting room, his hand tight around mine, his breath barely audible.

In the sitting room my aunt stood very proudly in her dark-flowered dress. And I felt her watching me as I froze. For I saw what had caused my parents' hesitation. It was a young man who sat by the table. Aunt Elsa's hand rested on his shoulder. He ate an orange-wrapped chocolate bar. He ate it like a small child, keeping the bar near his mouth even when he wasn't gnawing at it, and never taking his eyes off the color of the wrapper. His short upper lip moved incessantly, like a rabbit's. I recognized him from the picture. He was my cousin, Aunt Elsa's son.

"So our old Guest is here," my aunt said, her chin lifted. "We hear you are all leaving for London tomorrow."

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"Yes," I said. I knew I wasn't suppose to stare, but I noticed the orange-black sweater peeping from under the young man's jacket.

"Well, then, are you serious about your English now?" my aunt asked briskly.

I nodded.

"Capital," my aunt said. "And don't you feel badly because we decided to stay. We have a new Guest now." Her hand stroked quickly up and down her son's head. "Do you know why they ejected him from the sanatorium? Not merely because of race. Or why those great free countries would not give him a visa? Not for their so-called medical reasons. No, because he was the first to be on to them all. The first to defend himself. He turned his back on the world before it had a chance to turn its back on him. I felt he had a reason the moment he stopped talking. Let no mother pity me. Each time I visited him, he taught me something."

She paused. It was almost as though she waited for her son to speak. Then I realized she was displaying his silence. Her voice rose in triumph. "Did they call us mad in your house? Well, go and ask your parents now: Who was sane—and who was not?"

I did not know what to say. My eyes strayed to the mantle shelf where the pawns on the checker board had drawn together into solid pyramids, ready at last for a new game. I saw the ferns coloring the light like a green stained-glass window. I saw my uncle bend over the chiffonier and polish a spot with a corner of his apron. All was silent, weirdly perfect. There was no Strasbourg music, but my aunt's design was seamless and inviolable now.

"Goodbye," I said.

I embraced my uncle. His short breath stammered. His beard pricked me with awkward love. I did not put my arms around my aunt, for she held her hand out high. Her fingers were self-possessed and, for the first time, faintly perfumed. Nothing but silence followed me as I left the room. Nothing, except a whisper of tinfoil as my cousin nibbled on the chocolate.

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JOHN SIMON

Theatre Chronicle

IF THERE IS ONE THING THE AMERICAN THEATRE cannot afford to throw away, it is a play. And yet after twenty-eight painfully eked-out performances, Saul Bellow's *The Last Analysis* had to close, as though it were another confection, another soufflé that did not quite rise to the occasion. The truth is that the production was frightful, but no amount of superimposed opacity could obscure the underlying translucence and purity; what was here being rejected was rarer than a pearl in an oyster: a play in a Broadway playhouse.

I am not saying that Bellow's farcical fantasy about a once hugely successful comedian restaging his life as a closed-circuit TV show for an audience of psychiatrists at the Waldorf-Astoria, in order to shed light on the terrible disease Success, is a flawless dramatic creation. But there are things in it that we must hold dear. There is, first of all, the intense rhetoric that makes the word become flesh before our very ears and eyes: such throbbing flesh that it scarcely matters if the personages uttering it are somewhat less than people. Nor does it matter all that much (though it does matter) that this galaxy of galvanic words does not compose itself into a well-shaped entity; this, at least, is a case where the sum of the parts is greater than most other wholes.

The Last Analysis is a title whose significance is various. Bummidge, the comic, is carrying psychoanalysis to its most grandiose extreme. He has at one end not one but a whole battery of analysts; at the other, not just the fragments and figments which are the stuffing of the mind, but his real-life family and friends—most of them bitter foes—coerced into acting out his human, all too human, past, his fierce suffering from "humanitis." But the play attempts a last analysis in even simpler, or, if you will, more complicated terms: understanding what makes life so barely livable, so little alive. Bummidge the comedian gone unfunny not from staleness but from fresh, horrible awareness, becomes a symbol for the Jew, the American, the artist, the simple, naked man—symbolizing them not by turns, but all at once. Or yes, by turns: by comic turns which manage to be only faintly weirder than comedians' routines—just as the psychiatric jargon is only slightly exacerbated—but render with woebegone humor all the sadness of the human comedy.

When a cynical exploiter comments, "The audience are tired of the old nonsense-type nonsense; they're ripe for serious-type nonsense," the linguistic garishness falls in with the grotesqueness of paradox and anticlimax to elicit a kind of thinking laughter, which is probably the best kind there is. It is not Bellow's only kind, however. There is also

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the purely verbal one, as when Bummidge inveighs against his parasitical son, "You're lying, you crumb, you ex-sperm! . . ." And there is a lyrical laughter: "Today's heart is a rotten cantaloupe"—for isn't a cantaloupe both too big and too small for the chest of this poetically personified Today, thus achieving something more concentratedly absurd than can be wrung from mere prose.

As Bummidge relives every horror from birth, against which he is kicking already in the womb, through copulation which results in a shotgun wedding, to the death of individuality, which turns him into the chattel of a success-wielding society; as everyone from a dead father to a deceitful mistress falls into place under the roving eyes of television cameras rolling around Bummidge's ramshackle hangout; as mock-crucifixion jostles mock-birth, and mock-psychiatry mingles with mock-TV production numbers—the whole mess finally transcends itself into illumination. It appears that if you can carry self-dramatization (or self-comedization), exhibitionism, absurdity to their extremes, you come out at the other end universally admired, Olympianly laughing, and ready to love your fellow-freaks. "Watch from the fringes and you'll get benefits" says a lurking schemer; the arch-clown Bummidge watches from the center of his being and invites the world to watch with him. Zany self-revelation proves valid artistic creation and is acclaimed both by the social science of psychiatry and the exact science of show business. Bummidge goes off to found a school for despondent comics.

I wish there were not this final deterioration of the divine spirit of comedy into a mere mechanical device, so that the play ends with the emergence of a machine from a god. Instead of Bummidge's self-styled Platonic Academy, it could use a little Socratic *aporia*. But the work suffered less from this arbitrary ending than from chaotic direction and clumsy acting. We know that Bellow wrote originally a very much longer and in many respects quite different play. What changes were wrought, by whom, and to what effect, we can only gloomily surmise. What is unmistakable is that Joseph Anthony's direction, with its vaudeville sight gags and George-Abbottish bustle descended like a pall on the play, and that Sam Levene's incomprehension of Bummidge contributed another shroud's-worth. Levene played his standard Jewish comic nonentity, and could not begin to make Bummidge larger than low life-size. Whatever testifies to the character's seeing through cultural clichés, became in Levene's delivery merely dialectal mouthing, rather as if Milton Berle were reading the lines of, say, Coriolanus. The rest of the cast did not distinguish themselves, and Alix Elias as a sexpot in spite of herself managed to be downright offensive, but here again the sleazy staging must bear part of the blame.

Yet when all this is said, there is still no excuse for reviewers and audiences not to have come to the rescue of *The Last Analysis*. It was, in the last analysis, far more provocative than anything else around.

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Not provocative at all is the much heralded, eagerly awaited *Oh What a Lovely War,* Joan Littlewood's anti-war musical revue. This is strictly a one-gag affair: in the framework of a languidly old-fashioned British Pierrot show, we get the imbecile patriotic songs and escapist ditties and dances of the World-War-One era juxtaposed with figures and photographs of war disasters and satirical skits about profiteers, warmongers, and blatantly benighted civilians. The skits are, unfortunately, on the collegiate level, the photographs (like everything else) rather too cautious, and much of the acting and staging far from expert. The most serious trouble, however, is that what might have been mordant as a taut, ten-minute revue sketch cannot begin to make sense as a mellow evening's entertainment.

I say mellow because, however appalling the casualty figures running along the electrical band may be, in the end we can no longer respond keenly to the one-dimensional satire (particularly when combined with sentimentality about the little man), and more and more we find ourselves responding to the foolish ballads rather than to the flagging bite. But, then, foolish ballads can delight us only to a very modest degree. And when the show has something potentially searing to offer, like the grimly comic destruction of an Irish batallion caught in German and British crossfire, Miss Littlewood's direction dissipates most of the impact.

What is incontrovertibly first-class is the sapient clowning of Victor Spinetti (if only Bellow could have benefited by the likes of him!) and the loveliness of Valerie Walsh and Linda Loftis, the one a redhead all paprika and honey, the other a blonde whose peaches and cream are spiked with hard aphrodisiac. These three are remarkable; but, despite a pinprick here, a production number there, *Oh What a Lovely War* is hell to sit through. Admittedly, one noticed a good many people enjoying it—in much the same way, no doubt, as they might relish watching *Little Mary Sunshine,* enlisting in the army, or casting a vote for Goldwater.

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B. H. HAGGIN

Music and Ballet Chronicle

THE NEW YORK BALLET SEASON WAS OPENED THIS YEAR by the Leningrad Kirov (originally Maryinsky) Ballet, which exhibited much the same strengths and weaknesses as when it first appeared here in 1961—though the weaknesses this time were for me more obtrusive and important. The strengths were the excellence of the dancers—the corps, the lesser soloists and some of the principals—and the precision and finish of their thoroughly rehearsed operation, enough to make the long slow entrance of the corps in a series of arabesques at the beginning of Petipa's *Bayaderka* one of the most impressive and exciting things the company offers. One weakness appeared later in this piece, in the dancing of one of the principals, Kaleria Fedicheva, an efficient athlete completely without the elegant fluidity and style, the personal radiance, that ennoble the dancing of Alla Sizova and Irina Kolpakova: possessing only these two real ballerinas, the company has to use a mere athlete in ballerina roles, as it did again later in the same Gala Program when it presented Petipa's *Corsair* pas de deux with Fedicheva instead of Sizova who had danced it the night before. But even more important was the weakness revealed by two of the other pieces on the program, Konstantin Sergeyev's ballet, *A Distant Planet,* and Vassily Vainonen's choreography for a few passages from Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker:* the excellent dancers are presented in feeble ballets.

Nor are these only the new ballets. In 1961 I reported concerning the Kirov *Swan Lake,* with its Petipa-Ivanov choreography revised by Sergeyev, that to someone who had been seeing the excitingly beautiful and imaginative movements of the Balanchine version of Act 2 the movements of the Kirov version were insipid and boring. And this time I must make the same report about the movements of Sergeyev's revision of another Petipa ballet, *Raymonda*—as against the enchanting movements of Balanchine's choreography for some of the music of the Glazunov score, *Raymonda Variations,* which exhibit *his* developments and elaborations of the Petipa vocabulary and syntax. It was presumably similar movements that made Balanchine's version of the entire ballet for the Monte Carlo Ballet Russe in 1946 an exciting experience for me in spite of the absurd story, the sleazy scenery, the inadequacy of most of the principals. It had also the great performance of Danilova in the title role; whereas the Kirov performance I saw had Fedicheva, who contributed nothing that relieved the tedium of the occasion.

This time even the Sergeyev revision of Petipa's *The Sleeping Beauty* presented by the Kirov Ballet seemed to me inferior to the version of Nicolai Sergeyev performed by England's Royal Ballet, whose effec-

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tiveness is heightened, moreover, by the distinguished and imaginative scenic context provided by Oliver Messel, as against Simon Virsaladze's mediocre and drab sets for the Kirov production. But the performance I saw was irradiated by the loveliness and elegance of Alla Sizova's dancing in the title role—this in addition to the superb dancing of Yuri Soloviev and the fine work of the others; and so it was, for me, the one memorable experience of the Kirov engagement.

As it happened, the New York City Ballet's opening program of its Fall season began with *Raymonda Variations,* whose choreographic invention as executed by the dancers trained in the Balanchine style was an even greater pleasure to see after the Kirov presentations. Andre Prokovsky, in the role danced originally by Jacques d'Amboise and later by Edward Villella, got applause with the evident exertion of physical powers that achieved the difficult things he did—as against d'Amboise's or Villella's exertion of greater powers to produce the appearance of the difficult things being done almost with no effort. Prokovsky thus provided additional contradiction of the idea Balanchine holds to in the face of the many demonstrations to the contrary —that there are no differences between dancers, and stars represent only publicity. The difference between even as competent a dancer as Prokovsky, and d'Amboise or Villella, is clear to any eye; and while Balanchine may nevertheless have to use Prokovsky in a role that calls for d'Amboise or Villella, there should be recognition of the lessened effectiveness of the role when he is so used.

A further demonstration of this kind was provided in the next work on the opening program, Balanchine's *Four Temperaments.* As astounding today in the flow of its original invention as it was the first time in 1947, it is performed for the most part as impressively today as in 1947 by the new dancers Balanchine has had to use—notably by Mimi Paul in the third part of the Theme. There have been excellent performances also by Suki Schorer in this third part of the Theme, by Richard Rapp in the Melancholic Variation, by Patricia Neary in the Choleric Variation; and this time there was Gloria Govrin in the Sanguinic Variation, in which one expected to see her suitable strong clarity, only to be surprised by her relaxed, spacious performance, which gave the movements an entirely new and attractive character. But in place of Todd Bolender's unforgettable performance in the Phlegmatic Variation there have been the unsuitable quick and sharp movements of Arthur Mitchell's flashy style, which this time were even quicker and sharper and more damaging to the character of the piece. And I might add that even worse, a few nights later, was Mitchell's performance in *Bugaku,* in which I remember him from the first, in 1963, stepping with an almost dainty fussiness in places where Villella stepped simply, and in which, by now, his exaggerated crouching and lunging, his ostentatiously overelaborate preparation in Japanese-wrestler-style of every movement of body, arm and hand in the pas de

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deux, produce a caricature of the role in place of the powerful realization of it that Villella achieved with his quiet elegance and sustained tension.

Govrin's Sanguinic Variation in *Four Temperaments* was the first of several appearances by the younger dancers in new roles. *Symphony in C,* the second night, had Suzanne Farrell dancing the second movement with her beautiful fluidity, but not yet with the exquisitely inflected detail and the grand style of Mimi Paul's performance. A later *Raymonda Variations* had Karin von Aroldingen and Marnee Morris as excellent replacements for Govrin and Neary; and Morris was a very good second soloist in *Concerto Barocco.* In a *Donizetti Variations* with Villella, Sara Leland danced with impressive precision and clarity and humor, but not with the bravura required to bring down the house; however, the precision and clarity produced a most satisfying Polyhymnia in an *Apollo* with Villella. And Patricia McBride and Anthony Blum brought a youthful freshness to *Allegro Brillante* that made it newly attractive.

The season's first new work was Balanchine's revision of his Act 2 of *Swan Lake,* in which he eliminated what he had retained of the Petipa choreography, substituting invention of his own in Odette's supported adagio, eliminating the Petipa Pas de Quatre, and adding to his own Pas de Neuf several new numbers: a Valse Bluette for a group of Swans, a piece for Odette and four Swans, a Valse for Siegfried. And though one wouldn't think so from the grumbling in the press—which seemed to think it outrageous for Balanchine to make his own setting of music of his choice from the Tchaikovsky score—the result is a most beautiful work. Rouben Ter-Arutunian's somber new setting is good; but his costumes for the Hunters are unattractive; and the Swans' tutus longer in back than in front, however effective in concept, are disturbing in reality. But at last—thanks, perhaps, to the Ford Foundation millions—d'Amboise's costume includes a wig which lessens the incongruity of his American appearance in the role of Siegfried. He should be made to wear one in all such roles, including Apollo; and if necessary an additional grant should be requested from the Ford Foundation for the purpose.

In place of the new ballet of Anthony Tudor, which was not ready, the company presented John Tara's *Piège de Lumière,* which he created in 1952 for the company of the Marquis de Cuevas, and which is what one thinks of as being a ballet for the Paris public, with its story about escaped convicts in a jungle who set a trap of light for the big, brilliantly colored butterflies of the region that provide the occasion for spectacular costumes and choreographic ingenuities. These produce one theatrically effective scene—of the long progression of butterflies dancing across the stage toward the dazzling light, with an imaginative solo by the Iphias, danced well in one performance by Anthony Blum and in another by Prokovsky. The rest, which had

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Maria Tallchief as the Queen of the Morphides and Mitchell as one of the convicts, I found uninteresting. The costumes are by André Levasseur; the less impressive scenery by Felix Labisse.

D'Amboise's last two ballets left me unprepared for his *Irish Fantasy,* in which his indebtedness to Balanchine is evident but he uses what he has learned from Balanchine interestingly and with effective details of his own contriving—for example in the supported adagio. The performance I saw had d'Amboise himself in the dazzling feats of virtuosity that were not much more difficult than those brilliantly executed by Anthony Blum and Frank Ohman; and Suzanne Farrell was delightful in the allegros and exquisite in the adagio. The music is by Saint-Saëns; the lace fore-curtain ingeniously designed to become a canopy over the stage is by David Hays; the charming costumes are by Karinska.

The final new work was Balanchine's *Ballet Imperial,* which he created, with *Concerto Barocco,* in 1941 for the Latin-American tour of the American Ballet Caravan, and which was last performed in New York in the later '40s by the Monte Carlo Ballet Russe. One was grateful for the opportunity to hear again Tchaikovsky's rarely played Piano Concerto No. 2, which is so superior to the ubiquitous No. 1, and to see again the marvelous invention which the music elicited from Balanchine. The principal roles were danced brilliantly by Farrell, d'Amboise and Neary; but their unmistakably American looks were disturbing in their imperial roles, especially in the mimed dramatic episode of the second movement. The enormous draperies painted on Rouben Ter-Arutunian's scenery were too heavily obtrusive; but Karinska's costumes were beautiful. One hopes Frederic Franklin, the former maître-de-ballet of the Monte Carlo Company, who staged *Ballet Imperial* for the New York City Ballet, will be asked to stage two other Balanchine masterpieces that were in the Monte Carlo repertory, *Danses Concertantes* and *Le Baiser de la Fée.*

In what seemed to be a more thoroughly rehearsed *Prodigal Son,* Villella's performance had newly and well thought-out details which were less important than the increased continuity of his movements in the scene after the despoiling; but Shaun O'Brien, as the Father, damaged the end again by advancing toward the audience instead of toward his son. For the rest I report beautiful performances of *Episodes, Agon, Movements, Scotch Symphony, Pas de Deux* and *Tarantella.*[1]

[1] After I had sent in this report I saw Mimi Paul's Odette in *Swan Lake,* in which the image created by the contour of her body and the fluidity of its movements was impressively beautiful in the early scenes, and became excitingly so in the later solo with the four Swans, when she had relaxed sufficiently to operate with freedom and authority in movement completely, perfectly and breathtakingly achieved in its grand style. One flaw must be mentioned: her fluid bodily movement ends in a sharp bend of the wrist and a raising of the index finger which—in the rapidly repeated fluttering of the arms—became disturbingly obtrusive. The same after-

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I attended one of the concerts of the Chicago Symphony under Martinon, in Carnegie Hall's International Festival of Visiting Orchestras, to hear Stravinsky's delightful *Jeu de Cartes,* to hear Schönberg's Variations for Orchestra again after thirty years, and to hear more of Martinon's operation as conductor and musician in the performances of these two works and Beethoven's Fifth. The conductor's operation was as impressive as it had been last spring: the quietly assured Martinon again got the orchestra to play with precision and finish, yet with sensitiveness and suppleness, and with many varieties of beautiful sonority. And the musician produced an effective realization of the Stravinsky score—though one without the lightness and animation and incandescence of Cantelli's 1953 performance with the Boston Symphony; but Beethoven's Fifth proved to be as unsatisfying as Brahms's Fourth last spring, and for the same reason—the failure to maintain continuity of tempo in a movement. As for the Schönberg Variations, I can say only that it seemed to be performed well; for after thirty years—and hearings of other such music—the piece was still, for me, a progression of unattractive sounds which communicated neither expressive meaning nor even internal coherent relation.

It is some years since Aaron Copland's nonsense about the critics having misrepresented music like Schönberg's to a public which—if it hadn't been prejudiced against it in this way—would have heard in it a music as natural, acceptable, meaningful and valuable as the music of a hundred or two hundred years ago was to *its* public. The truth is that the critics wrote about what, as professional listeners, they heard, and what they wrote merely confirmed non-professional listeners' impressions of what *they* heard. And it is tiresome to hear the same nonsense again—not from a composer with an axe to grind, but from a critic, and from one as good as Michael Steinberg, the new music critic of the *Boston Globe.* In the desert of music criticism in this country the *Globe's* hiring of Steinberg is as notable an event as the New York *Herald Tribune's* of Virgil Thomson in 1940; since he brings to his task an equipment of perceptive ear, discriminating taste and good mind not exhibited by any other regularly writing music critic in this country that I know about. His fluent writing hasn't a trace of the literary distinction and grace of Thomson's; but most of the time it has the more important merit of staying close to the object before him, as Thomson's often did not; and only now and then do Steinberg's ideas or words sweep him off to a point as remote from the object as Thomson used to get.

noon program offered Suki Schorer's characteristically precise and charming performance in *Tarantella;* and in the evening I saw the beautiful *Scotch Symphony* of McBride and Villella for the first time. It was followed by *Apollo* with d'Amboise, whose continuing thought and work on his misconceived realization of the title role showed itself in a further increase of its stiff, angular and over-muscular pompousness to the point where I felt I couldn't bear ever to see the role so monstrously distorted again.

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For the most part, then, Steinberg has been enlightening his readers with accurately perceptive criticism—with the truth they were never told before about Munch and his performances of Berlioz, with realistic evaluations of Leinsdorf's soggy operation that have been an astringent corrective for the publicity stories in *Time* and the *New York Times* magazine (" 'Big Brother' Watches Over Tanglewood/ Erich Leinsdorf, known as a fierce taskmaster, is now in charge of the Boston Symphony and everybody's happy: Boston, Leinsdorf, audiences, students and musicians"). But on occasion Steinberg has written things like his statement about Szell's achievement in creating the Cleveland Orchestra: as against the brilliant orchestras in which "one of the players constantly stands out like a soloist, or . . . two men in a section sound as though they belong . . . in different ensembles," the Cleveland Orchestra—because of Szell's skill in selecting not just players of extraordinary individual capacities but players with "mutual relevance and compatibility"—had a unanimity, in addition to its "surpassing virtuosity," that made it "uniquely great, or perhaps even uniquely an orchestra." I find it entirely possible that Steinberg's ears are sharper than mine and hear things that mine don't; but in this instance I am confident that my ears are right in hearing in other great orchestras like the Philadelphia and the Philharmonia of London a unanimity like the Cleveland's, and in not hearing in them that player standing out like a soloist, or those incompatible players in a section, that Steinberg's ears hear. (My confidence is the result of an earlier experience: Steinberg wrote once concerning a recorded performance of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 that Menuhin broke the solo violin's very first phrase; and wondering how I could have failed to hear something so obvious, I played the record and found there was nothing even remotely like a break in the phrase as Menuhin played it.) I am confident also that my ears were right in hearing in the Vienna Symphony a well-disciplined group with first-rate strings, good brass and less good woodwinds that was considerably less than the "wonder" Steinberg's ears heard. And his ears may have heard the "dozen different kinds of upbeat" that mine didn't hear in Sawallisch's conducting of Mozart; but I am confident that my eyes and ears were right in seeing and hearing impressive competence in the Sawallisch operation but not the similarities to Toscanini's that Steinberg's saw and heard.

This running away with himself is a different matter from Steinberg's statement about the critics' having kept the public from enjoying Schönberg's music. Steinberg is one of those—still a small number, I think—for whom this music is attractive and meaningful; and he cannot believe it can fail to be attractive and meaningful to anyone else who listens to it. But I assure him that it can and does so fail for many music-lovers—which is to say that they simply don't share his taste for Schönberg, as others don't share his tastes for Bruckner's symphonies and Adolf Busch's violin-playing.

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AIME PATRI

Paris Letter

THOUGH ANDRÉ BRETON AND HIS FRIENDS have repudiated it (a repudiation prompted more by personal than doctrinal differences) the retrospective exhibit of surrealism organized by Patrick Waldberg and sponsored by Max Ernst, at the Galerie Charpentier, has met with enormous success. Devoted to works, documents, sources and affinities, it could easily have kept its doors open for half a year despite the rather high admission fee. Surrealism has been honorably ushered into history, now that it no longer causes public amazement, though from time to time some of its early finds are happened upon and declared sensational novelties. Can surrealism be said to have any unity? It seems characterized by contrast. There is a sharp separation between its weird imagery and its academically abstract style, which continues to be the legal tender of contemporary art exhibits. It is clear that for the majority of artists who have represented, or still represent, surrealism in the plastic arts, the painting is not an end in itself but a means of expression. What sets them apart is not their technique but the nature of their imagination. If Dali could boast of painting like Meissonnier, that boast holds true of his early work as well as his more recent. The most extreme case is probably that of Magritte, whose queer juxtapositions of objects show that the surreal image has not departed from its traditional definition, based on Lautréamont's example; and this may be said of painting and writing alike. Even in the work of Max Ernst, who is known as a great inventor of techniques, his diverse means spring from a single source of inspiration. What we have here, then, lies at the farthest remove from so-called *pure* painting. No artist under the sway of surrealism could ever be persuaded that the manner in which he expresses himself should concern him more than what he expresses. It would not occur to him to abolish the subject, nor even to neutralize it; the subject remains the object. In this sense, it may be said that there is no such thing, properly speaking, as surrealist painting, though undeniably there is surrealism in painting. Furthermore, surrealism, to the extent that it is the imagination, and that imagination is chiefly visual, looks upon painting as one of its chartered means of expression. Curiously, it has proved far more hardy than its literary counterpart which, as André Breton observed long ago in the *Second Manifesto,* could not resist becoming a system of conventions. In brief, a minimum of talent suffices to paint an abstract canvas that will flatter prevailing taste, while surrealism, merely to be itself, requires a minimum of genius, which explains perhaps why those interested in painting methods do

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not address themselves to that school. Patrick Waldberg is to be commended for the intelligence and probity with which he assembled works most representative of surrealism, paying no heed to personal enmities, which are so numerous that he would have been left with precious little to exhibit had he felt obliged to take them into account.

In the domain of literature, a book recently published, *Le Fou d'Elsa,* draws attention once again to (Louis) Aragon, who amputated his first name as a means of repudiating his early works which, in the twenties, gave him the reputation of being one of the most scintillating minds in surrealism (*Le Libertinage, Le Paysan de Paris,* etc. no longer appear in bibliographical notices sanctioned by him). Since then he has become known under different guises: as the patriotic poet whom General De Gaulle sought to place in the French Academy, as a novelist, and above all as communist director of the weekly, *Les Lettres Françaises,* a product of the resistance, but swiftly monopolized by the party after Paulhan's expulsion. Yet, like Lautréamont who, even after his conversion to Good, continued to speak, in POÉSIES, with the scoffing voice of Maldoror, Aragon will, by an occasional outburst of black humor, betray the ghost of "Louis." Was he quite serious in exalting "the France of Jeanne d'Arc and Maurice Chevalier," in marrying with some pomp the communism of Stalin and the nationalism of Barrès, in exhorting a few free-versifiers affiliated with the party to practice regular verse under his guidance, in singing in the manner of Déroulède or Théodore Botrel? His case is psychologically complex enough to allow a surmise that this systematic negation of his origins is tied up with them, so that he has remained faithful to himself in the same sense that Barrès did when he forsook the cult of self for that of the earth and the dead, a parallel suggested by Aragon to explain his evolution toward a new conformism. But *Le Fou d'Elsa*—with the post-Stalinist thaw and Aragon's white hair contributing—seems to announce a new phase, the negation of the negation, which is not to say that the first Aragon has been restored to us, but that the second has altered somewhat. This work, subtitled "poem," combines prose with regular and free verse, sometimes the octosyllabic line of song, sometimes a double octosyllabic that moves with an air of biblical gravity, and still other meters, rhymed and not. Its inspiration seems as motley as its form, for it means to do several things at once: to reinstate the last little king of Grenada, Boabdil, who was unjustly arraigned by, once again, Barrès, to sing the praises of the ubiquitous Elsa and, lastly, to meditate on time, now that old age is approaching. This does not represent a return to surrealist dream but if there is a unifying thread here, it can be found only in personal reverie, the sincerity of which we have no reason to doubt despite its mingling with more conventional themes. And there are, especially in the biblical-like verses, some very beautiful passages likely to assuage poetry-lovers who, before reaching them, must go through

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ritornello after ritornello and endure a gush of local andalusian-islamic color. This passage for example:

O nom que je ne nomme point et qui s'arrête dans ma bouche
Comme un objet de pureté qui briserait son propre son
Comme la fleur dans le tilleul avant de la voir que l'on sent
O nom de vanille et de braise ô comme l'oiseau sur la branche
Léger à la lèvre tremblante et doux au toucher de la main
Comme le verre que l'on brise et qui ressemble une caresse
Comme l'aveu d'une présence au bord de l'ombre tentatrice
Nom de cristal loin dans la ville ou tout près murmure d'amant
O nom qui rougit sur ma langue et si peu que je le prononce
Je n'ai désir qu'à demeurer comme sa traîne ou son parfum
. . . . . .

The theme of one and only love is something Breton and Aragon continue to hold in common. Both maintain the noble tradition of courtly verse, evidence that there are eternal things immune to revolutions, whether surrealist or communist. Elsa, to call her by the name she bears today, is "Délie, object of high virtue" (an anagram of "l'Idée" in Maurice Scève's poem), Beatrice or theology, who led Dante into Paradise, Laura who was Petrarch's treasure. But Elsa, present in the past as in the future, is also a real person who comes from Holy Russia and initiated Aragon into the new theology. Yet, inadvertently perhaps, the poet superimposed Stalin's moustache on the face of his Beloved back in the thirties when he acclaimed the Urals and in the same breath beseeched the people to "open fire on Léon Blum" (his poems *Hourrah L'Oural* were spared the bibliographical fate of his other early books). Fortunately she inspires him with different feelings nowadays and, among them, the courage to contravene that famous "sense of History" held in such esteem during the Stalin years; he has no fear of rehabilitating a defeated man, though quite aware of the comparisons that will, legitimately, be drawn between Boabdil and Paul Reynaud. Moreover, the poetic practice of going backward in time—what Mallarmé, in *Igitur,* termed "anachronism"—calls into question progressionism itself, the latter requiring a commitment to move forward, and only forward. No longer certain that the future holds Elsa, he projects Her into the past by reviving an extinct civilization. This sincere self-scrutiny of his gives rise to a quiet palinode which has its undeniably touching side:

Et je suis pire que celui qui profane sa propre souche
Moi qui trahis ma trahison et qui mens à ma propre bouche
En désaccord l'âme et la main par une infâme comédie
Mêlant la mort et le baiser les péchés et le paradis
. . . . . (p. 31)

During an interview with the weekly magazine *Elle,* the Aragons

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made, among their other confidences, a disturbing remark to the effect that someone in love should have no further need of friendship. Making her point a bit heavy-handedly, the female protagonist went on to say that she once summoned her lover to choose between herself and Breton's café, which serves to remind us that surrealism was not only Love[1] but friendship, too—with its rages and squabbles, sometimes as irremediable as those of love.

Now let us consider a different kind of exercise, this too involving poetry. I do not know whether it is appropriate to discuss, before an English-speaking audience, a translation from the Latin to the French, but Pierre Klossowski's translation of the *Aeneid* (published by Gallimard), being radically unlike its antecedents, is a literary event and, as such, deserves mention. Furthermore, the problems of rendering a poetic text from one language into another will interest a sufficiently broad public to allay my doubts. The fact is that Vergil is scarcely read today in the original, unless for academic reasons and, even there, schoolboys have recourse to trots which, scrupulous though they may be about the meaning, are by and large desperately flat and prosaic; no one reads them for pleasure. They account for everything but the pith, that is, the Poetic Line. But if we are to believe Mallarmé, according to whom there is verse where there is style, it would follow, ideally at least, that only poets (rather than language specialists) are fit to translate other poets. But this creates difficulties of another sort: the poetry of the translator may turn out to be his own rather than that of the text, more especially when he introduces his own meter. The translation of Vergil by the abbé Jacques Delille, one of the best French versifiers, is unavoidably "an unfaithful Beauty" whose beauty has somewhat antiquated charm.[2] The problem seems insoluble; it leads either to a squaring of circles or to metempsychosis. Poetry differs from prose in that it has not only a soul but a body. Someone once proposed that a measure of that difference is the relative impossibility of true translation. Yet insoluble problems, as mathematicians agree, have near solutions, and it is just such a solution that Pierre Klossowski has sought, without pretending to be a professional latinist; indeed, his effort will almost certainly incur the wrath of professional latinists since he works at cross-purposes with everything they teach their pupils. On the other hand he does not plead poetic license as an explanation of his method. He had in mind to make a tracing of the original, preserving not only the line divisions but also the Latin word order and the words themselves (even at the expense of their usual meaning) wherever they could be justified as being forebears of a French word. Latinists will censure him for flying in the face of "good French" and resorting to "false friends" and dismiss his

[1] Referring to one of surrealism's early "publicity" slogans: "Si vous aimez l'amour, vous aimerez le surréalisme"—*Tr.*

[2] Pierre Leyris, an excellent translator, has pointed out to me that Dryden's translation of the *Aeneid* offers a parallel in the English language.

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methods as misguided, absolute gibberish. In fact, these methods were used quite knowingly and with a very precise goal in mind—to preserve, physically, the movement of the Latin text, its way of presenting images, without of course doing what cannot be done in our language —recreating the stress of the original verse. Thus, something of Vergil's "charm" is conveyed in the translation, even if the strictly conceptual meaning suffers somewhat, but this is no longer a decisive factor since any translator who has exclusive regard for the meaning of a poem can give it only in the disembodied form of prose. Here are some examples, beginning with the Latin text (which the editor should have included on facing pages for the reader's convenience):

> Ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbram
> Perque domos Ditis vacuas et inania regna
> *(VI, 268-9).*

Leaving grammatical construction and alliteration aside and keeping strictly to the sense, it could be translated into French as: "Ils s'avançaient dans l'obscurité, dans la nuit solitaire, à travers l'ombre, dans les vides demeures de Pluton et ses royaumes inconsistants" ("They walked forward in darkness, in the lonely night, through the shadows, through Pluto's empty dwellings and unsubstantial realms"). But Pierre Klossowski has translated it thus:

> Ils allaient obscurs sous la désolée nuit à travers l'ombre
> A travers les demeures de Dis vaines et les royaumes d'inanité.

Note that the French "désolée" preserves the Latin "sola" by a phonetic trick that introduces a moral nuance. The union of Dido and Aeneas is described earlier. In Latin it reads:

> Speluncam Dido dux et Trojanus eamdem
> Deveniunt. . . . . *(IV, 165-6)*

The translator, in his determination to keep the Latin word order and the hiatus of the Vergilian line has come up with:

> Sous la grotte, Didon mais encore le duc troyen, sous la même grotte
> Se sont rendus. . . . . .

He had to repeat "grotte." In addition, it will be noted that the latin *dux,* not satisfied to become a "leader," usurps the nobility of its French scion, in language reminiscent of Du Bartas' *La Semaine* or Nostradamus' *Centuries.* This is a recurrent device, for Aeneas' "companions" (*comites* in Latin) are elevated to the rank of counts. But the ordinary troups have not been entitled "barons" because the word is germanic in origin. On the other hand, *pater Aeneas,* though somewhat irked and resentful, consents to remain "le père Enée" in French, and even Neptune accepts the paternal designation (more intimate in French than in Latin) without frowning too obviously, while Anchises

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humbly remains a "géniteur," as in Latin. The tracing can be carried so far as to make one reach for one's Latin dictionary: "la némoreuse Zacinthe" passes for a "translation" of "Nemorosa Zacinthe" (III, 270) because this gracious isle would lose something of its charm were it to remain "wooded." Latin "Fama," instead of being translated as "Renommée" dares to become "la Fame," though in ordinary French we possess only the derivative expressions "fameux" and "mal famé." The general impression it produces is one of picturesque rococo, at times overbearing. This may appall some people, but it has the same results as the sanding of millenial scum off ancient monuments which had become so familiar that we would walk by them incuriously. Now we look and we see, which does not necessarily mean that what we see faithfully records the original image.

One champion of prose as opposed to poetry, or so he presents himself in his literary essays, is Sartre. From his point of view, "words" should act as mere vehicles of meaning, or mind, and not be too obvious about foisting their flesh upon us. They must consent to make themselves invisible as they guide us directly "to things," according to Husserl's phenomenological edict. In my previous letter I could not elaborate on Sartre's partial autobiography, *Les Mots,* which I find fascinating, since at the time I had read only the first chapters. In my opinion this rather brief work, whose good-humored tone has few precedents in his other writings, is one of Sartre's best and most significant—a key, in some respects, to his total creation—philosophical and political as well as literary. From early youth, it was Sartre's ambition to become a great writer, an ambition he later decried, after it had been realized, because he also wanted something beside this. Most poets express a nostalgia for their childhood. Sartre tramples his own underfoot, shaming the little actor he was, fawned over by his mother and treated by his grandfather as a future luminary, a role he willingly played only, as he would have it, because he was the dupe of "words," still too far removed from things. It suddenly becomes obvious that Sartre's strange severity toward Baudelaire, the man, reflects his severity toward the child he himself was. He reproached Baudelaire for not having maturity enough to adopt firm ideological positions as a basis for some telling gesture on the world stage. But it is also clear that the Sartrean concept of the "committed thinker" first appeared in his child dreams under the guise of the "writer-knight," a synthesis of the great man of letters and the hero who redresses historical and social wrongs. Whoever has some acquaintance with Sartre's philosophical thought knows that one of its central themes is the noncoincidence of self and the consequent "bad faith." *Les Mots* gives one leave to suspect that this harks back to some personal disappointment but, also, that the theatrical calling may have its source in the inner discrepancy he analyzes. It is equally a source, so his conclusion implies, of "progressionism": unable to reach oneself, one is forever

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seeking oneself in the future. The past surpassed is incessantly "obliterated" (*néantisé*) so that to "grow up," in the sense parents and society attach to the expression, is to "flee." These concepts spring to life in Sartre's self-analysis (incomplete), the more so because, in speaking of himself, he does without philosophical jargon and reveals, whether he intended to or not, a part of the psychological infrastructure of his thought.

Has French philosophy produced anything new of late? The post-Sartrean generation inescapably begins its speculations with Sartre himself or with his masters, Heidegger and Hegel. But M. Michel Henry's thesis on *L'Essence de La Manifestation* (Presses universitaires de France), whose exceptional merits were duly acknowledged by the Sorbonne jury, takes an important step beyond vague syncretism by questioning what is commonly assumed to be true. Using an original approach—a meditation on the meaning of our affective life—he strives to reinstate the concept of a personal "subject" which, on Sartre's and Heidegger's say-so, people often consider obsolete, at least insofar as the nature of this subject is believed to inhere in some inward dimension of its own. In Sartre's view, subjectivity is freedom, but freedom is nothingness, a "perpetually future hollow," which means that all weight is shifted to the side of being or objects: this is the basis of Sartre's attempt to reconcile his thought with Marxist materialism. For Heidegger, the human subject is what it is thanks to "Being" which confers its one aptitude upon it, the power to unveil the world. M. Henry maintains that the subject is something in its own right, not "nothing," and that it does not exhaust itself in transcending or reaching beyond. The dialectical argument is that transcendence so conceived supposes immanence. But looking at it positively, the subject is, for itself, an affectivity from which one cannot gain distance, so that it cannot be objectified. Thus the author returns to the notion of an "inner life," unwilling to regard it as a "myth." Perhaps Henry tries too hard to make affectivity the true absolute, but this philosophical turnabout may have repercussions on other levels. It defies an age ever more "outgoing" in its daily life, which, because of this, has given itself to the very ideas with which M. Henry takes issue.

[*Translated by Frederick Brown*]

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Reviews

MARVIN MUDRICK

A Farewell to Spring and Paris

IT IS A BEAUTIFUL LEGACY, one we could hardly have dared hope for.[1] Yet in the Preface, at the very outset, the dead author speaks with the voice to which, during the last three decades of his life, he coercively accustomed us:

> For reasons sufficient to the writer, many places, people, observations and impressions have been left out of this book. Some were secrets and some were known by everyone and everyone has written about them and will doubtless write more.

That stiff metronomic swagger, and the pretense of large, efficiently withheld implications, together make up Hemingway's public manner, the prose style and life style that dominate his last thirty years, the unsubtle virus of his literary influence, the old impostor's parody of the young writer whose Paris apprenticeship this book belatedly celebrates, and whose voice it so delicately and sadly recollects.

The distinction between the young man in Paris and Papa on safari must be made against some resistance, since even the most sensible of Hemingway's critics assume a qualitative continuity in his work. They will grant an occasional failure—*Across the River and into the Trees* seems to have appalled everybody except Carlos Baker—but they anticipate, and are rewarded by, triumphant recoveries. So *The Old Man and the Sea,* that reduction to mushy parable of the Hemingway fish-and-game know-how, is discussed by Philip Young as if it were one of Beethoven's last quartets; and Young is almost equally impressed by numerous other exercises in the musclebound public manner. Young's book is nevertheless the best on Hemingway, because its reading of the Nick Adams stories—of the first and vintage Hemingway—makes sense of the stories, and nonsense of the dumb-ox label affixed to their hero by critics from Wyndham Lewis to D. S. Savage: "His typical central character, his 'I,'" writes the latter, "may be described generally as a bare consciousness stripped to the human minimum, impassively recording the objective data of experience"; Hemingway's fiction constitutes "a special form of that which might be termed the *proletarianization* of literature: the adaptation of the technical artistic conscience to the subaverage human consciousness."

[1] **A MOVEABLE FEAST,** by *Ernest Hemingway.* Scribner's. $4.95.

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The thesis of Young's book proposes, on the other hand, that critics like Savage are describing, if anybody at all in Hemingway's fiction, not Nick Adams, "the Hemingway hero" (the author's own persona and very nearly his autobiographical self), but a possible standard for Nick to aim at, "the code hero," the bullfighter or prizefighter or big-game hunter, who teaches Nick (or Hemingway) "to try to live by a code," though "the lessons" are not always "of the sort the hero can immediately master." Nick himself, neither a dumb ox nor a deadpan reporter, nor a man so skilled in his vocation as to perform it with the unreflective ease that Nick envies and would like to emulate, is

> . . . sensitive, masculine, impressionable, humorless, honest, and out-of-doors—a boy then a man who had come up against violence and evil and been wounded by them. The manhood he had attained was thus complicated and insecure, but he was learning a code with which he might maneuver, though crippled, and he was practicing the rites which for him might exorcise the terrors born of the events that crippled him.

The stories about him must be read not separately but collectively, as a sort of mosaic-novel, an unexplained segment here and another very much elsewhere in time and place though always about the same life, scattered pieces only ultimately converging into the full picture; and their common subject is the traumatic event (or events) that Nick passes through, relives in sickness and nightmare, tries to forget or put out of mind, never quite escapes from or grows beyond: the stories are, in Young's phrase, "bound tight about a core of shock."

The old writer of *A Moveable Feast* might agree, as he recalls an afternoon that the young writer spent with Gertrude Stein. The redoubtable lady, having just made a practical objection to the *"inaccrochable"*—as of a painting too indecent to be hung—language of a story of his (she herself wished and expected to be published in the *Atlantic Monthly*), proceeded to a somewhat qualified defense of homosexuality:

> Miss Stein thought that I was too uneducated about sex and I must admit that I had certain prejudices against homosexuality since I knew its more primitive aspects. I knew it was why you carried a knife and would use it when you were in the company of tramps when you were a boy in the days when wolves was not a slang term for men obsessed by the pursuit of women. I knew many *inaccrochable* terms and phrases from Kansas City days and the mores of different parts of that city, Chicago and the lake boats. Under questioning I tried to tell Miss Stein that when you were a boy and moved in the company of men, you had to be prepared to kill a man, know how to do it and really know that you would do it in order not to be interfered with. That term was *accrochable*. If you knew you

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> would kill, other people sensed it very quickly and you were let alone; but there were certain situations you could not allow yourself to be forced into or trapped into. I could have expressed myself more vividly by using an *inaccrochable* phrase that wolves used on the lake boats, "Oh gash may be fine but one eye for mine." But I was always careful of my language with Miss Stein even when true phrases might have clarified or better expressed a prejudice.

The old writer is at last coming at the truth of his experience directly, not, as the young one did, obliquely and implicitly, not evading it by bluster and tricks as Life Magazine's champion bull-thrower learned to do. For the pathos of Hemingway's reputation is that he got it years after his best work had been done, and that he felt obliged to sustain it by accepting and coarsening the public rôle of the true-born American writer: tough, terse, athletic, unliterary (this omnivorous man of letters who read every book he could lay his hands on), "a bare consciousness stripped to the human minimum, impassively recording the objective data of experience."

The reputation had its lethal effect on criticism, which either attacked the public image as if it were all there was of Hemingway, or praised virtually all of Hemingway as if the public image were quite unrelated to the work. Even Young's book, good as it is on the Nick stories, founders on the public image, since Young's thesis doesn't help him to distinguish between the early master and the old impostor. The real thing ("Big Two-Hearted River," for instance, Young's examination of which is a model of intelligent analysis in support of a critical position) gets confused with so brassy a counterfeit as "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber." It is bad enough that "Macomber" exhibits Hemingway's crudest sketches of his code hero and his bitch-heroine; but worse that the code has been simplified into imbecile bravado: if a man runs away from a charging lion he is a coward, and if he stands to face it he has confirmed his manhood. Nick Adams—the boy in "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," the youth in "The Battler," the man in "Big Two-Hearted River"—inhabits a world in which the problem of choice, unlike Macomber's, is unresolvable by any single action, and more difficult than lions.

The style of the Nick stories—however it may have launched itself with tips from newspaper reporting, Sherwood Anderson, Miss Stein—is as original and personal an invention as anything in literature; but it is also one of the narrowest in range, and among the least usefully imitable. Just as Lawrence speaks of "shedding one's sicknesses in books," so Hemingway speaks of writing as the writer's own therapy: "If he wrote it he could get rid of it. He had gotten rid of many things by writing them." Still, Lawrence's "sicknesses" have a breadth of curiosity, an impetus into the outer world, an intimate and hereditary connection with literary tradition, that ventilate and generalize the

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great resourceful style that bears them. The sickness that Hemingway tries to get rid of has no such outward impulse, it seeks only to withdraw from any further contact and damage; and the style it generates is an opaque thin membrane against which it obscurely presses and reluctantly defines itself without quite breaking through into a void of hysteria (except now and then, as in "A Way You'll Never Be" and, perhaps, "Homage to Switzerland"). Some of the most remarkable effects of this barely managed control occur in extended passages of dialogue:

> " Come on back in the shade," he said. "You mustn't feel that way."
> "I don't feel any way," the girl said. "I just know things."
> "I don't want you to do anything that you don't want to do—"
> "Nor that isn't good for me," she said. "I know. Could we have another beer?"
> "All right. But you've got to realize—"
> "I realize," the girl said. "Can't we maybe stop talking?"
> They sat down at the table and the girl looked across at the hills on the dry side of the valley and the man looked at her and at the table.
> "You've got to realize," he said, "that I don't want you to do it if you don't want to. I'm perfectly willing to go through with it if it means anything to you."
> "Doesn't it mean anything to you? We could get along."
> "Of course it does. But I don't want anybody but you. I don't want any one else. And I know it's perfectly simple."
> "Yes, you know it's perfectly simple."
> "It's all right for you to say that, but I do know it."
> "Would you do something for me now?"
> "I'd do anything for you."
> "Would you please please please please please please please stop talking?"
> He did not say anything but looked at the bags against the wall of the station. There were labels on them from all the hotels where they had spent nights.
> "But I don't want you to," he said, "I don't care anything about it."
> "I'll scream," the girl said.
> The woman came out through the curtains with two glasses of beer and put them down on the damp felt pads. "The train comes in five minutes," she said.
> "What did she say?" asked the girl.
> "That the train is coming in five minutes."
> The girl smiled brightly at the woman, to thank her.

Later writers, including Hemingway, radically mistook the vibrations of such dialogue (from "Hills Like White Elephants") and fabricated a whole subliterature of stylized detectives, criminals, deep-sea fisher-

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men and smugglers, virtuous and easy-virtue ladies, all of whom lavishly and complacently protected the reader from polysyllables and complex sentences. But the Nick stories, and such related ones as "Hills Like White Elephants" (the unnamed young man is really Nick, and has Nick's troubles), are in fact waking nightmares: the early Hemingway style is the indispensable discipline that keeps them from erupting into psychosis; it could scarcely be more inappropriate, except as parody, to the expression of an assured and knowledgeable reticence.

Hemingway did not, at any rate, maintain the early style and its preoccupation. Soon he had less to say about Nick and more about the code hero, in such stories as "Fifty Grand" and "The Undefeated," more about the code itself in all the novels: if the Nick stories are classifiable as the nightmare stories, the second group might be designated the know-how stories. In even the best of these the style appears more mannered and sententious, less continuous with its material. The preoccupation with merely keeping sane gives way to a shallower and less convincing preoccupation with physical competences, especially when there is the flavor of death in them: expertness in a dangerous athletic vocation signifies moral fineness or at least intense moral awareness, as if to court death in a ceremony of skill (like the bullfighter, or the big-game hunter) is finally to live well. In even the better novels—*The Sun Also Rises* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*—the effort to refract the external world through the style which had so successfully subjectivized and rejected it produces the sense of strain and affectation that is, in the public mind, the Hemingway style, "impassively recording the objective data of experience." The irreducible sickness is still there, but the novels, when they consider it at all, grotesquely simplify it (as with Jake Barnes) or pretend that it will yield to vocational or political or erotic affirmations. Hemingway's novel-heroines are particularly offensive because they sound like the girl in "Hills Like White Elephants" compelled to read affectionate lines she doesn't believe to a man pretending he isn't Nick: the dialogue between the lovers in *A Farewell to Arms* is deprivation itself, displayed in the frozen attitudes of a period coyness; and the novel in which Nick is to be saved by passion precipitates him into the most puerile of daydreams. The last step, which Hemingway takes in stories like "Macomber" and "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" as well as in the late novels (except *For Whom the Bell Tolls*), is self-parody: the old impostor betrays the youthful master by attaching their name to parodies of the code, parodies of the style, emetic effusions of self-pity (as in "Kilimanjaro"), parodies of masculinity and pride.

A Moveable Feast, recognizably Hemingway as it is, makes a new beginning. It is the first book by the old master, and full of pride, amusement, melancholy, and—of all things—love. It has marvelous vignettes: the encounters with Miss Stein, and their terrible climax in the overheard conversation between her and her "friend"; the comic

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and amiable description of Pound's efforts to raise money from penniless writers (like young Hemingway) so that Eliot could leave his job at the bank and devote all his time to writing; the evening with the painter Pascin and his girls:

> "Chez Viking," the dark girl said.
> "Me too," her sister urged.
> "All right," Pascin agreed. "Good night, *jeune homme*. Sleep well."
> "You too."
> "They keep me awake," he said. "I never sleep."
> "Sleep tonight."
> "After Chez Les Vikings?" He grinned with his hat on the back of his head. He looked more like a Broadway character of the Nineties than the lovely painter that he was, and afterwards, when he had hanged himself, I liked to remember him as he was that night at the Dôme. They say the seeds of what we will do are in all of us, but it always seemed to me that in those who make jokes in life the seeds are covered with better soil and with a higher grade of manure.

The best episode, very likely the best writing Hemingway ever did, is his account of Scott Fitzgerald. Gleaming with moment-by-moment revelations of its subject (the memorable scenes in literary history will certainly include the one in which Hemingway reassures Fitzgerald about the adequacy of his sexual equipment), it is an absolute statement of what Fitzgerald himself tried to write in *Tender Is the Night,* the minor tragedy of the weak, gifted man destroyed by a ferociously competitive wife:

> Zelda had hawk's eyes and a thin mouth and deep-south manners and accent. Watching her face you could see her mind leave the table and go to the night's party and return with her eyes blank as a cat's and then pleased, and the pleasure would show along the thin line of her lips and then be gone. Scott was being the good cheerful host and Zelda looked at him and she smiled happily with her eyes and her mouth too as he drank the wine. I learned to know that smile very well. It meant she knew Scott would not be able to write.

—a wife whose irreversible victory over her husband is to go mad:

> That night there was a party to welcome us at the Casino, just a small party, the MacLeishes, the Murphys, the Fitzgeralds and we who were living at the villa. No one drank anything stronger than champagne and it was very gay and obviously a splendid place to write. There was going to be everything that a man needed to write except to be alone.

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> Zelda was very beautiful and was tanned a lovely gold color and her hair was a beautiful dark gold and she was very friendly. Her hawk's eyes were clear and calm. I knew everything was all right and was going to turn out well in the end when she leaned forward and said to me, telling me her great secret, "Ernest, don't you think Al Jolson is greater than Jesus?"
>
> Nobody thought anything of it at the time. It was only Zelda's secret that she shared with me, as a hawk might share something with a man. But hawks do not share. Scott did not write anything any more that was good until after he knew that she was insane.

Much has been said about the cruelty of Hemingway's portrait of Ford Madox Ford. But Hemingway had perfected his hatreds too (his treatment of Wyndham Lewis makes his attitude toward Ford appear almost kindly); and the dialogue he records—though it may well have been that Ford was putting him on with a poker-faced travesty of the English gentleman—is a very funny epiphany of transatlantic relations:

> "Was Henry James a gentleman?"
>
> "Very nearly."
>
> "Are you a gentleman?"
>
> "Naturally. I have held His Majesty's commission."
>
> "It's very complicated," I said. "Am I a gentleman?"
>
> "Absolutely not," Ford said.
>
> "Then why are you drinking with me?"
>
> "I'm drinking with you as a promising young writer. As a fellow writer in fact."
>
> "Good of you," I said.
>
> "You might be considered a gentleman in Italy," Ford said magnanimously.

That concluding adverb, which none of the previous Hemingways would have indulged, is a sign of the fresh start, in which adverbs and metaphors are allowed to amplify and relax the texture of the prose:

> "I think it would be wonderful, Tatie," my wife said. She had a gently modeled face and her eyes and her smile lighted up at decisions as though they were rich presents.

For Hemingway at the very end wrote his authentic love story. We will never know just what Nick or Hemingway was suffering from, or whether it was many things, or whether all these sufficient things screen off the genuine unfaceable article: his puritanical home, his ambitious and disappointed mother, his father's suicide, his war wound. *A Moveable Feast* suggests something besides: a broken heart. The heroine—Hemingway's only live and persuasive heroine—of *A Moveable Feast* is the first Mrs. Hemingway. The book is in praise

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of her and of what he lost when he let her go, since losing her he gave up not only her love and his but his youth and his friends and Paris, everything that encouraged him to write the early stories and that he suppressed in order to emerge as the formidable and nerveless public figure:

> When you have two people who love each other, are happy and gay and really good work is being done by one or both of them, people are drawn to them as surely as migrating birds are drawn at night to a powerful beacon. If the two people were as solidly constructed as the beacon there would be little damage except to the birds. Those who attract people by their happiness and their performance are usually inexperienced. They do not know how not to be overrun and how to go away. They do not always learn about the good, the attractive, the charming, the soon-beloved, the generous, the understanding rich who have no bad qualities and who give each day the quality of a festival and who, when they have passed and taken the nourishment they needed, leave everything deader than the roots of any grass Attila's horses' hooves have ever scoured.

The vision of youth in an unspoiled spring shines out once more before it is overpowered:

> When I saw my wife again standing by the tracks as the train came in by the piled logs at the station, I wished I had died before I loved anyone but her. She was smiling, the sun on her lovely face tanned by the snow and sun, beautifully built, her hair red gold in the sun, grown out all winter awkwardly and beautifully, and Mr. Bumby standing with her, blond and chunky and with winter cheeks looking like a good Vorarlberg boy.
>
> "Oh Tatie," she said, when I was holding her in my arms, "you're back and you made such a fine successful trip. I love you and we've missed you so."
>
> I loved her and I loved no one else and we had a lovely magic time while we were alone. I worked well and we made great trips, and I thought we were invulnerable again, and it wasn't until we were out of the mountains in late spring, and back in Paris that the other thing started again.

That Hemingway could have come to such a candor of private regret and love and longing against the grain of his so carefully cultivated reputation, less than a year before his death, is the proof of the health he died in. There are no charging lions or leaping marlin in *A Moveable Feast,* or wars or rumors of wars. The book is not only a new beginning for one of the greatest American writers, but his masterpiece.

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HERBERT GOLD

Saint Sartre: The Spaces Between the Words

HERE I FIND MYSELF, EH VOILA, in the lovely situation of having the knife in my hand. I could, if I would, place a blade in the paunch of the hero of my philosophic youth. I learned French and took abstraction from his lips. I read *Situations* while admiring the faded flowers honoring the recent dead at the corner of the rue de Beaune and the rue du Verneuil, "Mort Pour la France." I puzzled over the hostile vacuity of *No Exit.* I even tried to read *Being and Nothingness,* and absorbed a few errors along the way.

Now Sartre, the melodramatist of wartime and postwar Paris, is both popular and passé. As a student selling my clothes to Arabs, I dreamed of pleasing the dwarfish scribbler hero whom I occasionally saw at a cafe table, his head stuck between the breasts of a gigantic lady, his head bobbling as he talked, her boobs bobbling as she listened; the one which wore the glasses was Jean-Paul Sartre. At the famous Cafe de Flore, the Deux Magots, at the Tabou, and also at the Gargouille, at the Rose Rouge, and at the Rouquet, which is now consecrated to medical students and their slim chicks—in those days the medical school emplacement was just a row of fences plastered with Communist, Fascist, Gaullist, and Socialist posters, plus invitations to cinema club showings, and the chicks were stylish but pasty—Sartre gave a generation its rhetoric, its dreams of glory, its fantasy of engagement. Like Picasso, he was protean. Like students everywhere, we needed a hero.

Some such infatuation comes to all those impatient ones who learn about reality from symbols, and suffer the error of taking words for things. Sartre's mission was to find truth in the human construction of a picture of reality. It was also his uneasy fate; it was an obsession; statements about the world are, after all, the only proper subject of the descriptions "true" or "true picture" or "true insight." But this mission also distorted its original sense, for the picture of reality given by symbols is not the reality with which we begin when, in the yearning heart, we seek reality. And so Sartre caught himself in error. Irony, self-gnawing, nausea, anxiety, dread were his fate. But it was finally a congenial error, necessary, fruitful, and bearing within its strict exercise the possibility of continual, although never-to-be-completed correction.

The residue of our encounters with a writer means something special. Without looking into the books, what happens when we glance at

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the spines or remember the titles? If we have read and studied a man over the years, it is instructive to see what lies at the bottom of the filter. And so, beginning with the G.I. Bill fad for the philosopher of action, what has become of the man who was then St. Sartre? We Americans of the first G.I. Bill and Fulbright floatation into postwar Paris found a world upon which, along with Abelard and Mimi and Artaud and the Gestapo, there were fresh decorations—Juliette Greco, Mouloudji, Jean Genet, Merleau-Ponty. Camus? I sighed through his heavy, shrill plays. And Sartre, his hand in every pot, explained all things, wrote plays and novels, started political parties, attended afternoon ones, was interviewed, was brooding (it was loudly intimated) on his final philosophy. If mysteries remained, and they did, at least he named all the mysteries. Summations lay imminent ahead. Just be patient; pass the time while you wait with suffering and coffee. Like Spinoza's God, Sartre was the principle which made sense of the universe—black market and rationing, the vogue of pederasty and western movies, the fear of Germany and the anguish about the Soviet Union, jazz and blues and Auvergne lyrics.

Notes from ancient history:

Sartre dealt with the issue of the duty of a populace toward an occupant. If a German soldier asks you for a match to light his cigarette, you give it to him, because he is asking as a man, another human being, and it would degrade you to refuse this symbol of common human solidarity. But if he asks a direction, you lie or pretend ignorance, because now he is on duty and acting as your enemy. You preserve your humanity as his antagonist. You must fight him in every way you can, but still you must not degrade yourself. All right, that's an answer.

I sent him the manuscript of my first (very immature) novel and he did not reply or acknowledge it. That was the appropriate answer, too, and shows that this garrulous Frenchman knew how to use silence as well as words.

In the play *The Devil and the Good Lord,* Sartre depicts Goetz as a demagogue seeking to enlist the mob. A leper, ringing his bell, crosses the square. Goetz calls him; he summons him to approach for a grandiose gesture of charity. The leper knows these saints. He raises his hand to his mouth in disgust. "Not on the lips!" he pleads. How we use mercy, how we argue our own virtue. Bad faith.

When the Russian tanks shelled Budapest, Sartre, a fellow traveller, was asked: "What did you feel when the Hungarian revolution was crushed?" He answered: "L'angoisse." The pedantry makes us smile while the horror remains.

In June of 1958 I was in Paris during a crisis which approached civil war. Algeria, parachutists, torture, the last days of "ces messieurs," silent marches, a city jammed with police. Union newspapers asked workers to stay home and watch the skies from their rooftops. Terror

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and anarchy, and business as usual. While de Gaulle prepared to take power, crowds gathered beneath Sartre's windows on the rue Bonaparte at St.-Germain-des-Près. At two in the morning, his lights were burning. They sought to receive his word. He was writing his pamphlet. Dutifully they waited. He was thinking out what to think. Frenchmen love to read plausible words about the decay of civilizations, their own in particular; about the breakdown of institutions, expecially their own. They stood in the rue Bonaparte, smoking and gossiping, disgusted and hopeless, insomniac, alert, communing in spirit with the man upstairs who cared. Along with deputies, publishers, radical haberdashers, and labor leaders, Sartre's apartment was later bombed. A *plastique* blew out his library. N'importe; he went to write elsewhere.

Words, words, words.

Sartre aims to count himself among the heroes of history, not the geniuses. His grandfather, not God, his mother, not Mary, himself as a child, not the Holy Ghost, breathed the fire into him. He takes confidence only from making, forming, planning, working—from the will. *He* did it, struggling with his fate; there was no divine fatality. How odd, then, that he sometimes fancies himself a Marxist, and prattles about the destiny of the class struggle.

And so now he gives us *The Words,*[1] the first volume of his autobiography, a melodrama of ideas, aphoristic, pathetic, comic, self-indulgent, selfish and self-abnegating and self-serving, sentimental, ironic, a true attempt at history and an attempt to make history by a cunning reconstruction of the past. The Algeria nuts bombed one of his apartments, but the lights have been burning late on the fifth floor of another. He has been at it again. In short, a new work by Sartre, and perhaps his most perfect, and therefore surely one of the essential books of the time.

2

Who is little Sartre, this wall-eyed creature whose grand pattern is crammed into the history of petted and pampered Jean-Paul up to the age of potency? First, a boy without a father. His father died shortly after the boy's birth. "He loved, he wanted to live, he saw himself dying; that is enough to make a whole man." Sartre was barely curious about him. Therefore: "I have no superego." There were no limits; in a sense, no conscience. (Yet how much responsibility! Too much.) Without the paternal antagonist, with adoring sister-mother and grandparents, he built his babyhood on blandness. "A kiss without a mustache, as was said at the time, is like an egg without salt . . . and like Good without Evil." He plays with his grandfather's cliché because these are surely not parallel categories. Perhaps kisses are viable

[1] THE WORDS, by *Jean-Paul Sartre.* Translated by *Bernard Frechtman.* Braziller. $5.00.

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without mustaches; perhaps Good without Evil, if imagination be present.

A prodigy is always abstract. In music or mathematics, it may work fine; in the pursuit of truth, prodigiousness corrupts. "In Platonic fashion, I went from knowledge to its subject. I found more reality in the idea than in the thing because it was given to me first and because it was given as a thing." How he loved books! He pored through them before he could read, imitating his grandfather; he sniffed and palped and hefted them, and was praised for nosing about. The crack of a leather spine thrilled him. Of course the world was less real than words, and philosophic idealism was implanted in his back like the rotting apple in the body of Gregor Samsa. But at least books smelled of something real, the mushroom stink of old leather. A mystified and weary child, he "relished the ambiguous delight of understanding without understanding: that was the density of the world." Words were his love; writing was his pride and lust. "To name the thing," he admits with shame, "was both to create and take it."

What writer, searching his heart, is not guilty of the same illicit possession? He daydreams erotically of Meaning; he fondles his fantasy. And yet we all hope, out of this lying assault on sleeping reality, to kiss the princess and awaken her to be ours. Unlike Gaul, we are divided into just one part—the faction of the slaves to language. We will please our ancestors and delight our descendants by gamboling in the sack with a suddenly renewed—what? *Vocabulary*. The princess is all rosy and her belly is heavy and her buttocks squeeze and she is the Princess of Print.

If Sartre felt mere guilt for this banal authorial fantasy, he would be obvious, silly, maudlin, a poor monk begging forgiveness for his vocation. Happily, he is laughingly guilty; his humor is a mercy. He is free to toy with all emotions, even with his deepest shame. Why? An almost corporeal optimism. For heroes, the world is not necessary, not fatal; it is to be examined, judged, altered, *created*. Strife and the illustrated disorder of poetry never lead to real bleeding, but they cause good results in the return to order. The poet, deciding on suicide, waits until after he finishes his poem. And then maybe he finds that another poem is necessary, and another, and another, and so why kill himself? There is no time. There's too much to do. Kafka didn't find it necessary to go mad. Tolstoy kept senility at bay while he wrote in his journal, "Another day. Still alive."

And yet, the play-acting of the writer, of the spoiled child, leads him further into anguish. Silence, exile, and cunning are the results of bad faith, too. Writing is perhaps therapy for neurosis, but makes impossible a cure of the derangement of character. The poet gives value to what must have less value than he thinks it does. It has some value, true. But he deludes himself that it will change the way of the world. Gravity is not his toy. The despair of revising the laws of gravity is irremediable.

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3

Sartre invites facile psychoanalysis by his readers. He is smilingly, blandly, casually frank. He has supreme confidence in his essential secrecy. I too fall into the trap, thinking: He is a better essayist than a novelist; why, since he has the nerve for conflict and a vivid love of life? Well, perhaps the novelist must also have two parents and an Oedipus complex. It's partly a matter of pace. Sartre's heroes usually find their decisions in a violent flash of climax. But in real life we struggle with the ghosts of those other selves who inhabit us. We are not free. We are driven to try and try again. The same old problems, the same old lusts. We are satisfied; we are frustrated; we are satisfied again. And it recommences. We have fathers. Our mothers are not our sisters. Sartre says: "Truth and Fable are one and the same . . . one must feign passion in order to feel it . . . human life is a ceremony."

Well, yes and no. We can see why fatherless Sartre likes fatherless Genet. But despite the psychological sense of this, which we have already learned from William James, the actual weight of the ceremony which is human life is corporeal, time-ridden, unique in its single place in history. The force that through the green fuse drives the flower is not an abstraction. We *want*. Passion comes before the feigning. Fable and truth are not, in fact, identical. History separates things. An event cannot be duplicated, nor can it be entirely resolved in ceremony. We are not pure victims, any more than we are purely free or individual, but we are not floating in history, either. Occasionally, like Genet, we are assaulted from behind, but these are tricks which we deal with in our own ways. Perhaps even by dying—the ultimate in a solution which is both general and personal.

Sartre continuously hears the machinery of law and nature clanking; he is so self-conscious because there was no one else to be conscious for him. Most of us forgive ourselves for being pushed by daddy and by history, and we move along anyway. The game of freedom within the reality of necessity torments Sartre. His humor and his detachment relieve him, but do not, of course, solve the issue. He still hears the buzz and jerk of the machinery. Oh yes, but one other quality redeems it for him. He takes life for an epic.

Aristotle's great cliché, that poetry is both truer and more philosophical than history, finds a natural illustration in the career of this man who wants to be poet and historian, poetic innovator and historical actor. He keeps apologizing for his twists of affiliation, his passionate disavowal of his last idea along with his equally distraught nagging at the reader to accept his new idea. He knows that if you stick to the facts, you fall into error, if not into triviality. But if you soar from facts into the private truth of your own fantasy—and if you have the gift, into the general dream—well, there's where lying becomes divine.

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He wishes to trumpet today's truth. Wrong yesterday, he is right today; but heads up! Tomorrow is on the way. He is victimized by the hope of eternal verity. He sits down again and again, scratching at paper.

Must not something of the same vain hope stand at the origin of Picasso's dream, and yours, and mine? As e.e. cummings said, we are only would-be poets except at the rare moment when we are actually making poetry. The rest of our lives—hoping. Is cummings a poet now? No, he is one of the honored dead, nothing more. He cannot even prevent his name being printed with a capital C. It's a poor way to end, and it's the rub for everyone.

"The liar," Sartre remarks, speaking of himself as a child, "was finding his truth in the elaboration of his lies. I was born of writing. Before that, there was only a play of mirrors." This is a practical way of saying that existence precedes essence; more precisely, that *action* precedes essence. Writers who do not act dramatically in the world are miracle-mongering deceivers who ask for money to show you the moon "and end by showing you their behind for five francs." The writer must teach, excite, change, move. This means he must also be wrong much of the time. He is not a genius, free to let the gods speak the verities through his body. He is a hero, often dying in lost causes. He explores freedom, and yet is justified by necessity. Maybe. At any rate, he questions his own right to live. The "coddled child, bored on his perch," recognizes mankind in himself and then himself in mankind. Generosity is born of egotism.

I suppose there is a Walter Mitty movie flickering in Super Bible-vision between the ears of every writer who gives himself the heroic mission. He seduces and he issues laws. He takes no guff and he has an answer. He buckles down to save the unsavable world. Sartre is Mr. Up Tight, with sex and death and creation all united in his jazzy, teasing assault on reality.

Writing about ideas, of course, is different from just admiring or dreaming them—as anyone knows who has ever broken a wrist or a finger on his writing hand. A pencil is an awl; the writer prods and pokes and carves at the world; he is a sculptor, chopping away at the brute reality. And so the idealism of writers is always modified by their sweaty task. The furious boy Jean-Paul uses his tool with indomitable hope. He will protect us. He stands firm. He stockpiles fantastic heaps of words to shore up against the flood the savannah on which we all dwell. Again and again, the flood rises. Again and again, he pelts it with words. Occasionally he takes off his cap to throw it into the wind and shout hurrah. A phrase has dented a wave. He does not notice that the wave sweeps on, and also that his cap has disappeared in the storm.

However futile, the habit of carving words out of our destiny is one of the most glorious, most human habits imaginable. Words do not bring peace, but they help keep us in condition to go on going on.

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4

I notice that I haven't yet put the knife in my boyish hero. There is more to say. Sartre's comedic talent is sometimes inadvertent, a laughable result of his willed simplicity, his nagging and gnawing the primary matters, his excited agitation of already-decided questions. "What is Life?" is always a little ridiculous, but also it's a touching question. His paradoxical, ambiguous, ironic, committed and uncommitted complexity leads him to seeing all sides at once, and then later, still another side. Rarely has the physical defect of being wall-eyed—here comes another ad hominem—seemed more appropriate.

Besides his humor, besides his energy, another quality redeems the question, "What is Life?" It is not intelligence, though of course Sartre is a prodigious thinking machine when his pen begins its soiling course. It is not his good will, his virtuous but abstract love of humanity. It is his faith, faith in the power of the Word—and faith that the word will be powerless tomorrow and a new word must be found. He searches for a justifying party, and trusts in the self. He takes equal strength from his pride in mankind and his disgust with its baseness. This child of pastors is a passionately believing atheist.

An Englishwoman, Janet Teissier du Cros, in *Divided Loyalties*, her memoir of life in occupied France, writes tenderly about certain qualities of the French mind—"their passion for intellectual integrity, their belief in the creative power of speech, their gift for taking what they do seriously but themselves not at all." Hardly a better praise can be found for this father without a father, the son of France, Jean-Paul Sartre. With all his confusion of words and things, ideas and intentions, today and yesterday and tomorrow, despite the double game of anguish and playfulness, within the pointed judgment about his "sincerity," Sartre has really become the hero he has sought to be. It must be an odd surprise for this man of freakish life. If *The Words* is not a work of genius, it is something nearly as valuable—an autobiography that reflects the inner rhythms of all who seek to make sense of existence by scratching on paper.

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WILLIAM DICKEY

Poetic Language[1]

LET ME BEGIN WITH SOME QUOTATIONS. From William Hull's *The Other Side of Silence:*

> Arise, the Western Virgin lights the East.
> Sing, leaves of ash, in jubilation flash
> the tidings, our unrisen bread has yeast.

From Samuel Hazo's *Listen with the Eye,* the poem "Mother with Child":

> What gathers at her heartbeat to recall
> the ninth and longest month when she woke numb
> with hurt and gathered in a satchel all
> she needed for the trip and life to come?

From Russell Edson's *The Very Thing That Happens,* the prose poem "An Old Man in Love":

> An old man decided to fall in love with himself. He gave himself a flower.
>
> No no, I do not want to marry you, he said, you're old enough to be my father.

From Ken Smith's pamphlet, *Eleven Poems:*

> Slowly all nature opened, and was unseen.
> Your body arched over crushed grass,
> and the hot sun on my shoulders
> was my body above you. The country
> grew a stillness, in which only we moved.

From Wendell Berry's *The Broken Ground,* the beginning of the poem "The Aristocracy":

[1] THE OTHER SIDE OF SILENCE, by *William Hull.* Swallowtree Press. $1.75. LISTEN WITH THE EYE, by *Samuel Hazo* and *James P. Blair.* University of Pittsburgh Press. $4.00. THE VERY THING THAT HAPPENS, by *Russell Edson.* New Directions. $1.60. ELEVEN POEMS, by *Ken Smith.* Northern House. $.50. THE BROKEN GROUND, by *Wendell Berry.* Harcourt, Brace and World. $3.95. IT TAKES PRACTICE NOT TO DIE, by *Elizabeth Bartlett.* Van Riper and Thompson. $5.00. PERSON TO PERSON, by *John Ciardi.* Rutgers University Press. $3.50. TACTICS OF SURVIVAL, by *George Hitchcock.* The Bindweed Press. $1.50. THE DEAD LECTURER, by *LeRoi Jones.* Grove Press. $3.50. THE STALINGRAD ELEGIES, by *James Schevill.* Alan Swallow. $2.75. THE WHITSUN WEDDINGS, by *Philip Larkin.* Random House. $4.00. FOR THE UNION DEAD, by *Robert Lowell.* Farrar, Straus and Giroux. $3.95. THE FAR FIELD, by *Theodore Roethke.* Doubleday. $3.50.

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Paradise might have appeared here,
surprising us, a tackle of sublime coordinates
figuring over the trees, surprising us, even
though the look of the place seems not
altogether unexpectant of such an advent . . .

From Elizabeth Bartlett's *It Takes Practice Not to Die:*

Nervously, she rubs her good luck stone,
then wraps her thoughts in cellophane as a heroine
of film and fashion, glad to forget home, school,
and all the lost-girl tales they tell of Hollywood.

It is my contention that each of these passages represents a failure to find a poetic language that is viable and worth remembering. The first three passages represent the more distinct, the more noticeable failures, the remaining three are all examples of what one might call the neutral language of poetry, something that we recognize as conforming to the conventions of the poetic diction of our time, but that seems to present only the matrix of those conventions, the blue clay out of which, on occasion, the startlingly different form of the diamond can emerge.

What's wrong with these passages, and what different things would their authors have to do to achieve a memorable language? There seem to be two kinds of answer to this question, one involving the things we have done and ought not to have done, the other the things we ought to have done but have left undone.

A successful poetic language will not emerge unless it is allowed a certain seriousness, a certain intelligence, and a certain power of variation. It is with respect to these requirements that my first three samples fail. Mr. Hull does not examine his language with any effort to determine how it's going to strike the reader, and thus overlooks the possibility that what he has done will be ludicrous or ambiguous. This is a failure of intelligence, and it is shared by Mr. Hull's Achates, Wilbur S. Scott, who, in his introduction to the book seems to see nothing odd in saying "The story line begins with Dandy's chance to achieve self-knowledge and redemption. He moves from the meadow of innocence to the corrupting town, is corrupted, is rescued by his love for Melinda Lou, through whom he begets his son, Handy Hopper, and, terrified with this rescue, leaps into Niagara Falls." Where there is no ability to distinguish the congruous from the incongruous, no judgment of the *appropriateness* of language can be reached.

Mr. Hazo's is a failure of seriousness. His poems accompany a series of accomplished standard photographs by James P. Blair, and it seems rather as if each collaborator had expected the other to sound the pitch-pipe and set the real tone. Mr. Hazo does not expect his poems to stand by themselves, and consequently he does not give them skeletons, does not provide the whole subject of the poem within the poem

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itself. The language is doubtless appropriate to *something*, but it is left for the photographer, or the reader, to do the work of establishing what that something is.

Mr. Edson's failure is one of range. Denise Levertov, in her introduction to this book, describes Mr. Edson's world as one "in which the persons are rarely said to speak, but, quite casually, *scream* their conversation. . . ." But of how much use to us is a language with only one pitch? Mr. Edson's fables are sometimes arresting, if too many are not read in succession, and I admire him for being the only contemporary poet I know of who may have been influenced by Beatrix Potter ("A cruel rabbit quit its nest and came into the house of the old woman who takes medicine for dinner"). But I am afraid that a language so persistently invariable must eventually come to seem more mechanical than human.

With these writers, the failures seem obvious. Mr. Smith, Mr. Berry, and Miss Bartlett present more of a problem. It is hard to take reasonable exception to their language. They *are* intelligent, they *are* serious, they *do* have a certain range. Why then should their work be so easy to forget?

The problem here, I think, involves the relation of the individual voice to the voice of the convention. Each of the passages I have cited seems to me to have arrived at a plateau of competence. This competence involves the skillful manipulation of certain kinds of language: the motion toward objects not intrinsically poetic ("wraps her thoughts in cellophane"), the use of incremental repetition ("surprising us"), the disturbance of the customary patterns of prose syntax or of the kinds of objects customarily involved in that syntax ("the country grew a stillness"), the rapid connection of concrete and abstract terms ("a tackle of sublime coordinates"), the deliberately muted tone ("even though the look of the place seems not altogether unexpectant"). These qualities, and the habits of mind they represent, are ones we have come easily to expect of the poetry of our time; to see them is to recognize our own familiar reflection in them, and to be disturbed because we are so anonymous. For the truth is that it would not be at all strange or unsettling if Miss Bartlett's passage appeared in Mr. Berry's book, or Mr. Smith's in Miss Bartlett's. What we hear is not so much the voices of the individual poets as it is the persistent monotone of the convention: uniform, accomplished, well-mannered, and a little dull. Mr. Berry, Mr. Smith and Miss Bartlett have evidently tried to write good poems. They have gained a serious competence in the handling of language, they have trusted that competence, and it has betrayed them. They stand as a rather frightening lesson to the hundreds of aspiring poets with whom the country sometimes appears to be saturated. The lesson says: This knowledge is not enough.

But if it is not, and if the language of the convention is by itself, in-

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adequate, we have to consider what departures from that language, or what special uses of it, provide us with a memorable poetry. Let me begin this discussion with another group of quotations.

From John Ciardi's *Person to Person:*

> Morning glories, pale as a mist drying,
> fade from the heat of the day, but already
> hunchback bees in pirate pants and with peg-leg
> hooks have found and are boarding them.

From George Hitchcock's *Tactics of Survival,* one section of a longer poem:

> On deck a woman
> in an enamel dress,
> her eyes painted
> open, plays Chopin
> on a rusty spinet.

From LeRoi Jones' *The Dead Lecturer,* the opening of "Crow Jane in High Society":

> (Wipes
> her nose
> on the draperies. Spills drinks
> fondles another man's
> life. She is looking
> for alternatives. Openings
> where she can lay all
> this greasy talk
> on somebody. Me, once. Now
> I am her teller.

From James Schevill's *The Stalingrad Elegies:*

> You must be ruthless, Margaret.
> Make your flesh judge for a change,
> As ours does here. Forget the sentiments
> Of tradition and status. Art is no aristocrat.
> Then your disappointment will be less.

At any given moment, from Middle English down to the present, the language of the poetic convention is an expected language, one which is easily recognizable because it represents the denominator of what we have grown up with. The language of viable and original poetry is not one which departs wholly from this convention—it cannot be, since it is in terms of, though not by the limitations of, the convention that we recognize those kinds of language which we can identify as poetry. The convention is the poetry of which we are already aware, the basic disturbance of spoken language toward a poetic mean. Memorable poetry manipulates the double concept of

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the convention and of the departure from it, in a relationship similar to that between regularity and variation in metric language.

What relation, then, do the four passages cited, and the books from which they are drawn, have to the convention?

The quality that I find most notable in Mr. Ciardi is that of observation; he sees things with an intensity and an accuracy that no conventional language can wholly contain. The effect of a convention is to smooth out the differences between things; it expects, having established a form of language, that all objects will be equally amenable to its ministrations. But Mr. Ciardi's objects break these bounds; his sight is defined by the object itself, and he accepts and uses the object's own recalcitrance toward language that will soften it. "Hunchback bees in pirate pants" is a phrase wholly determined by what its object looks like, rather than by a kind of language which is felt to be appropriate to the discussion of objects in general. Mr. Ciardi is often sententious or sentimental in his attitudes toward the things he discusses, but those attitudes never prevent him from seeing what is before him. This ability to see is neither easy nor usual, and it represents one of the most important ways in which the floating world of poetic language can be given a persistent human relevance, a persistent reference back to the solidities of existence.

Mr. Hitchcock's technique consists of an excitation of language. He begins, often, from a situation which the convention would be prepared to admit, but he refuses to allow his language either to dispense with the convention or to conform to it. "Her eyes painted aqua" would represent a conformance with the purely verbal level of the convention, with the assumption that for poetry to take place, language must be slightly disturbed from its prose or spoken mean. "Her eyes painted beanstalk" would represent the anti-convention, the assumption that only an escape from or a denial of the relationships of objects is of real worth. "Her eyes painted open" both disturbs and returns; it shakes up the usual approaches of language, but it does so in order to demonstrate new congruities. Mr. Hitchcock's poems are more memorable than some of those discussed above, because they include not only an attitude toward the language of the convention, but also an assumption that that language can be used, that out of an apparently conventional beginning the poem can return to a real discussion of a real thing.

LeRoi Jones is among the younger American poets who are concerned with establishing a closer relationship between the object and the word used to represent it. Such attempts to find vigorous language and capable language are continual in poetry; one might think of Du Bellay as Mr. Jones's co-worker. The attempts are necessary and honorable, but they seem to carry with them their own difficulties.

In Mr. Jones's case, these difficulties are those of overstatement. The Imagists reacted to the diffuseness and mechanical puffiness of preceding poetic language (where an egg could presumably appear only in

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its aspect as a soufflé) by becoming intensely contained and still. Now that that stillness has itself become a convention, and perhaps a limitation, Mr. Jones's reaction is to shout: "these shabby personalities/ the pederast anarchist chants against millions of/Elk-sundays in towns quieter than his." The revitalization of language is not simply a matter of *forcing* words to have meaning. How would we go about trying to resurrect lovely, individual, colossal? Not, surely, by involving them in compounds or extraordinary juxtapositions. But these forcing tactics are the ones Mr. Jones most easily employs; his effort is to wrench the word into a context where it must shudder, repent of its sins, and then take up wholesomely and whole-heartedly the New Life. The problem with such a technique is that it cannot be economical; so much of its effort must be spent on establishing the word in its new surroundings that there is little time left in which to use the word with skill, ease, and a belief in its rightness. It is like the renaming of the months in the French Revolution. The new names are naked and violent; they have no familiars, no body of accepted connotation which mediates between them and us. Because his poetry lacks such mediations, Mr. Jones must say things at length, must repeat them several times, in order that within the poem he can establish that familiarity which the previous convention could automatically depend upon.

James Schevill's attitude toward language does not admit of Mr. Jones's forcing tactics, but it still concerns itself with the same problem: how is the language of poetry to be made direct and explicit. Mr. Schevill's answer is to turn toward the exact idiom of human speech; his assumption is that accurately heard language will of itself, if its subject is of sufficient importance, achieve the elevation and concentration that distinguish the language of poetry from that of prose. Mr. Schevill's revitalization of language does not depend, as Mr. Jones's does, on a manipulation of the language itself; where Mr. Jones is concerned with giving the language of poetry a new voice to say things in, Mr. Schevill is concerned with giving it a greater variety of things to say. One cannot too easily visualize Mr. Jones *in propria persona* saying "the pederast anarchist chants" or Mr. Ciardi saying "hunchback bees." Mr. Schevill's language has the advantage of sounding initially like spoken language: "You must be ruthless, Margaret."

This language has in a sense by-passed the problems with which Mr. Jones is confronted, because it has made two assumptions, first that a large and various subject-matter is already naturally open to it, second that that subject matter can successfully be dealt with by selecting from among the phrases and idioms of an already accessible and familiar voice. Mr. Jones moves into an essentially arbitrary language which he expects to break the patterns of conventional poetic language; Mr. Schevill simply refuses to admit that the customary distinction of prosaic and poetic language, or of prosaic and poetic subjects, is wholly true. His language is thus less susceptible to momentary irritations than is Mr. Jones's, and it is also more generally

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available. Instead of requiring his reader to learn something that immediately appears radically different, Mr. Schevill allows him the illusion of discovering something which he has doubtless known all along, but which he now recognizes in a more concentrated, more exact, and more serious form.

I have tried to indicate both some ways in which the language of poetry can fail, and some in which it can prove new and successful. I have now to consider, of the books given me for review, the three which seem to me most completely to achieve a viable poetic language: Philip Larkin's *The Whitsun Weddings,* Robert Lowell's *For the Union Dead,* and Theodore Roethke's *The Far Field.* In what ways does the language of these books differ from the language I have previously been examining?

It is, to begin with, more brief and more intense; it contains more facts within a given space of words. Where Miss Bartlett would say

> Now there are great numbers of people
> coming and going with the wind,
> and the wind seems changed . . .

Mr. Larkin says this:

> Oh, no one can deny
> That Arnold is less selfish than I.
> He married a woman to stop her getting away
> Now she's there all day . . .

Mr. Lowell says this:

> Work-table, litter, books and standing lamp,
> plain things, my stalled equipment, the old broom— . . .

And Mr. Roethke says:

> The edge of heaven was sharper than a sword;
> Divinity itself malign, absurd . . .

The effect of the neutral poetry of the convention is very often a plural one; objects are seen in pairs, or clutches, or genres, or categories. There are "great numbers of people," but there is seldom one Arnold. There are perhaps birds, or many flowers, but there is seldom one work-table. And while there are many heavens about, and many things which I suppose must have edges, there is seldom a *sharp* edge of heaven. The literal and the figurative are not usually so concentrated as they are here (or as they are in one panel of the comic strip *B.C.,* where the philosopher Peter goes away, saying, "I'm going to discover the edge of the world," and B.C. answers, "Be careful. Don't cut yourself"). But real people and cutting edges seem to provide the situation out of which successful poetry begins. And it seems too to be in the interplay between those real objects and the ideas they excite or are excited by that the successes of such poetry take place. If the object is

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not real enough, we may move toward the excesses of Swinburne, where objects have become so plastic that they drip helplessly from the ends of one's imagination. If the idea is not real enough, we may come to the opposite excesses of Whitman, where the objects are often untameable and unusable, and can do nothing but sit in a row and say in chorus, "I, I, I." The real object is recalcitrant to being changed, as the pluralized object is not. And thus the object is capable of testing and challenging the idea; only if the idea is itself sufficiently forceful and defined, will it allow the real object to discover, for the first time, its full recognition of what it is, and of how it is truthfully related to other things.

Mr. Larkin, Mr. Lowell and Mr. Roethke have in common, then, a concern with the actuality of objects and people, and they share a sense that the purpose of poetic language is to express exactly and economically how objects, people and ideas respond to one another. Perhaps because they are convinced of the reality of their objects and the importance of their ideas, they also share an abruptness of attack. Thus Mr. Roethke: "Was I too glib about eternal things. . . ." Or Mr. Lowell: "My whole eye was sunset red." Or Mr. Larkin: "Lonely in Ireland, since it was not home. . . ." Each of these is the first line of a poem, and each expresses an impatience to get on with the subject, to get as much as possible said.

While the three books show these similarities, they are in other respects very different. And while each demonstrates a substantial degree of poetic success, and the accomplishment of a proper poetic language, the successes are not the same, because the size of the subjects considered is not the same.

Let me cite, first, Mr. Larkin's poem, "Days," which, though short, seems able to represent the tone of his book:

> What are days for?
> Days are where we live.
> They come, they wake us
> Time and time over.
> They are to be happy in:
> Where can we live but days?
>
> Ah, solving that question
> Brings the priest and the doctor
> In their long coats
> Running over the fields.

The poem indicates, clearly, the virtues of Mr. Larkin's poetic language. There is no neutral tone or neutral hesitation; the subject is engaged directly and succinctly. It is a subject worth discussing, a subject that involves central possibilities of the human condition. These possibilities, too, are presented bluntly and directly: "They are to be happy in. . . ." Within the terms of such directness, Mr. Larkin seems to have gone as far as there is room to go.

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But Mr. Larkin has of course been practising a *reductio* on us, both in his language and in the substance of his poem. What he has to say is exceptionally clear at least in part because it is exceptionally limited. The words seem often to be chosen for their lack of previous connotation; the syntax is deliberately simple, so as to allow none of the possible balances of thought that are provided by qualifying clauses. Everything moves sharply to a single point, and by so doing obscures the fact that other motions, more sidelong or tending more to return upon themselves, might be equally able to inform us of the direction in which we have to go. While I admire the skill with which Mr. Larkin isolates his subjects, and while I would agree that the subjects, so isolated, are seen with a notably precise definition and clarity, I am not entirely persuaded that such a definition constitutes the largest possibility open to poetic language.

Robert Lowell's book has the quality he seems from the outset to have possessed, and which Mr. Larkin's book lacks: a nervous alertness, the irritability of an organism whose world is full of natural enemies, as Mr. Larkin's world is full of natural definitions. This quality is demonstrable even in a very brief poem, like "Epigram (For Hannah Arendt)":

> Think of Leonidas perhaps and the hoplites
> glittering with liberation,
> as they combed one another's golden Botticellian
> hair at Thermopylae—friends and lovers,
> the bride and the bridegroom—
> and moved into position to die.

It is not alone the density of modifiers that distinguishes this language from that of Mr. Larkin. The placement of "perhaps" in the perfect middle of the first line, where it can serve as the pivot of a see-saw, the insistence of the sound relationships between "glittering" and "liberation," the third-line break between the modifiers and the noun they modify—all of these argue for a poetry of furious and uneasy motion, rather than for a static one. Where Mr. Larkin intends to persuade and determine, Mr. Lowell seems to intend to excite and release.

Another difference between the language of the two poets should be noted. Mr. Lowell's language is, as it has regularly been, one heavy with connotation. He expects, as a matter of course, to control attitudes and associations which precede the poem, which are inherent in the charged words he chooses to employ. Mr. Larkin prefers to work with a language that diminishes these associations, so that the effect of the poem is gained wholly within the limitations of a structure it has itself provided. The distinction in voice is almost as great as that between polyphonic and monophonic music. The mode of most influential twentieth-century poetry has been polyphonic, and ears accustomed to hearing that interplay of voices may automatically find Mr. Lowell's style preferable to that of Mr. Larkin. I hope that my

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own preference is not entirely governed by this automatic response. Because he does include such a considerable variety of connotation, Mr. Lowell seems to me capable of saying more in a brief compass than Mr. Larkin can, and for this reason I think his poetic language more successful.

I come last to the man who has been most in my mind as I wrote this review. Theodore Roethke's *The Far Field* carries on its jacket the phrase "The last poems of a major American poet." Roethke's friends must, even more than I do, who had never met him, regret that these are the last poems. But I hope they are comforted in their knowledge that in this book Roethke achieved the fulfillment of his very great abilities. These final poems establish his proper place; they move, as few poems at any time can move, into the living body of the language, and define its beauty.

I am myself too much influenced and shaped by Roethke's use of language to be at the moment a good critical judge of his work. I know that what he does involves a great deal of daring, because it includes opening the word to its broadest areas of connotation, admitting and controlling the most formidable body of possibility. Often one may begin discussing a Roethke poem in terms of limited reference: it is *about* religious experience or *about* madness. But in the end one discovers that "about" is the wrong word, that what Roethke has done is to abandon abouts, and to try instead to deal with central patterns and motions of human experience, patterns which recur, are relevant, in terms of religious experience or madness, but which are really larger than any one of their limited manifestations suggests. The effort of Roethke's poetry is an incredible effort: it wants to admit everything. What is even more incredible is the fact that it does, it succeeds.

As an example, then, of what I think a wholly successful language of poetry, let me end by quoting the final poem of Roethke's final book:

ONCE MORE, THE ROUND

What's greater, Pebble or Pond?
What can be known? The Unknown.
My true self runs toward a Hill
More! O More! visible.

Now I adore my life
With the Bird, the abiding Leaf,
With the Fish, the questing Snail,
And the Eye altering all;
And I dance with William Blake
For love, for Love's sake;

And everything comes to One,
As we dance on, dance on, dance on.

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SIDNEY MONAS

Where Are You, Pushkin?[1]

ONCE IN A FAMOUS POEM Mayakovsky asked Pushkin down from his pedestal, evidently having forgotten *The Bronze Horseman* and what happens to indiscreet poets who address monuments. Then, after Mayakovsky's death, there was a Mayakovsky statue too. He and Pushkin bisect Moscow with their public stare: Mayakovsky all vigorous motion, radiantly optimistic, rugged jaw out-jutting; Pushkin a bit wistful and disconsolate, yet warm and homely, right arm slightly extended to welcome and drink bruderschaft with the commonest of men—each unlike himself; a bronze deception. Is that what it means to be a national poet?

Yet poetry is also what people make of it. Some years ago, a gifted critic from Eastern Europe was lecturing in the West, where he had not been for twenty years. Influential friends, knowing the regime at home caused him anguish, tried to arrange a university post for him in the West. He refused. "I know," he told them, "that here I can say anything I want. But there—there, they listen!"

Whatever it might mean to be a national poet, the term fits Pushkin oddly. The messiah of Dostoevsky's anniversary-speech is difficult to reconcile with the author of *Eugene Onegin*. Though he claimed to sing "freedom in a dreary age," he certainly did not identify himself with the masses. Indeed, the implications for Europe and the world of Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, when he read that book, appalled him. He was an aristocratic liberal; his political opinions were neither popular nor populist.

"You said what needed saying," he wrote, in the draft of a letter to his cosmopolitan friend, Chaadaev:

> Our present society is as contemptible as it is stupid. It lacks a public opinion, is indifferent toward duty, justice, right and truth, and has a cynical disdain for all that is not necessity. . . . You should have added—not as a concession, but as the truth—that the government

[1] EUGENE ONEGIN, by *A. S. Pushkin*. Translated by *Vladimir Nabokov*. Bollingen Series No. LXXII, 4 vols. $18.50. Translated by *Walter Arndt*. Dutton Paperback. $1.95. SELECTED VERSE, by *A. S. Pushkin*. Translated by *John Fennell*. The Penguin Poets. $1.45. THE STORY OF A LIFE, by *Konstantin Paustovsky*. Pantheon. $10.00. PAGES FROM TARUSA, edited by *Andrew Field*. Little, Brown. $6.75. THE NEW WRITING IN RUSSIA, edited by *Thomas P. Whitney*. Univ. of Michigan Press. $6.75. FOR THE GOOD OF THE CAUSE, by *Alexander Solzhenitsyn*. Praeger. $3.95. BOTH SIDES OF THE OCEAN, by *Viktor Nekrasov*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. $4.50. SELECTED POEMS OF ANDREI VOZNESENSKY, translated by *Anselm Hollo*. Grove. $3.50. POEMS, by *Boris Pasternak*. Translated by *Eugene Kayden*. Antioch Press. $5.50.

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is still the only European in Russia. Brutal and cynical as it is, it could have been a hundred times worse.

He hoped for and worked very hard to create—beside the government, influencing and in the long run mitigating it—"another" European, a literature the more European the more Russian, and a public that cared. In his mind images that signified destiny were closely linked with images that signified the free poetic imagination.

We Americans are a pious people, willing enough to show a superficial respect for almost anybody's monument. "As lyrical as Pushkin!" we exclaim. And if anyone wants to know how lyrical that is, here is a passage from Stanza XIX of Chapter Three, *Eugene Onegin,* in which Tatiana talks with her nurse. I quote from Babette Deutsch's translation, for about twenty years the only one easily available:

> "Ah, nurse, nurse darling, I am hounded
> By longing. I am ill, I fear:
> I want to cry, to sob—oh, nursey!"
> "My child, you're ill! The Lord have mercy!
> God grant it's nothing! Welladay!
> How can I help you, only say!"

"Is that," I hear another pious voice, "the guy who influenced Tolstoy?"

Now there are two new translations, and a convenient bilingual edition of selections from the whole range of Pushkin's verse, including some passages from *Onegin.* All this is considerably better than we have had. Pushkin may not now have to be altogether confined to his pedestal.

Vladimir Nabokov's translation is, of course, a long-awaited literary event. It appears in four handsome boxed volumes, reasonably priced. The first volume consists of Introduction and Text; the second and third of Commentary; the fourth of a facsimile reproduction of the rare 1837 Russian edition (the last corrected by Pushkin himself) and a superb index. I miss reproductions of some of the manuscripts showing the remarkable drawings with which Pushkin filled his margins. Otherwise the edition leaves little to be desired.

Before dealing with Nabokov's theory and practice as a translator, I must say something about him as a writer. His linguistic abilities are, of course, legendary, and his taxonomic skills, both as a lepidopterist and as a literary scholar, are formidable and well known. His small book of translations from Pushkin, Lermontov, Tiutchev, is the best thing of its kind we have from the Russian; but his translation of the *Song of Igor's Campaign,* composed according to his revised ideas on translation, is an almost unmitigated disaster. It will be immediately apparent that *Pale Fire* was the direct product of his work on Pushkin, although perhaps the idea of the extended footnote as an art-form is more Gogolian than Pushkinian. The *Onegin*-like interplay of literary

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styles and the parody of styles out of which characters and situations are woven and assume a life of their own was typical of Nabokov long before *Pale Fire*.

His major theme has been that of exile, by which he has been properly obsessed. I do not, by exile, mean mere displacement of country or mother-tongue, but the cosmic exile of the Manichees, the exile of spirit to a world of brute matter where it cannot be at ease and where in art alone there flashes an occasional brief glimpse of the lost home. Mr. Pnin is merely a token and instance of such exile, and the stylised version of the author who intrudes so unexpectedly a different instance —the attempt being to desentimentalise and universalise the figure of Pnin in that novel. In *Lolita,* Humbert Humbert, with his name like eyes burning in the dark, is an exile both literally and metaphorically, driven by his need for which in the flesh there can be no possible fulfillment.

About halfway through the twenty years during which Nabokov had been at work on *Eugene Onegin* he underwent a kind of Gogolian conversion as a result of which he burned the supple and remarkable Pushkinian stanzas he had written, only a few of which had been published, declaring them heretical and insufficiently faithful to his new standards of translation. In two articles and a blistering polemical review,[2] he has taken issue with the whole "recreative" tradition of translation from St. Jerome through Chapman to Pound, reaffirming the principles of the literalists. As Humbert's eyes burn in the dark, so burns the holy name. Nabokov seems to have arrived at a kind of protestant-fundamentalist literalism in which the spirit killeth and the letter alone giveth life.

Nabokov's avowed aim is to follow what he calls the "servile path" of selfless devotion to a great writer's masterpiece—complete accuracy, absolute fidelity. The word, the phrase, the line, tend to become more significant units of translation than the stanza or the Chapter. In any case, the austere principles according to which Nabokov has translated his text make it extremely difficult if not indeed impossible to read without the long Introduction and Commentaries he provides, which thus tend to become part of the text in the reader's mind. There, he manages to fling a self-repressive vocabulary around with characteristic abandon.

Realising that complete accuracy cannot be attained, Nabokov establishes a hierarchy of values in translation. Rhyme is the first to go, since it would be "mathematically impossible" to sustain the pattern over four hundred sonnet-like stanzas without terrible and frequent awkwardness in a poem that is, in the original, with only a few lapses, extraordinarily nimble and sure-footed. Yet surely a simplified stanza,

[2] "On Translating Pushkin," *Partisan Review,* Vol. XXII, No. 4; "The Servile Path" in the Harvard University Press volume *On Translation,* 1958; the review of Arndt's *Onegin* in *New York Review of Books,* Vol. II, No. 6.

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better adapted to a poem of this length in English, even a freer stanza, might have provided a viable alternative. In order to convey to the reader the effect of the Pushkinian stanza, however, Nabokov has composed and included in his Introduction two marvelous poems in the form and meter of *Onegin,* with all the devices, the characteristic shifts and enjambments, the wit and delicacy of touch of their great model.

Next after rhyme, exits tetrameter. Polysyllables are more common in Russian than in English. Therefore, to retain the same number of feet in a line as in the original invites padding.

Last to go is the iambic beat, which Nabokov does manage largely to retain, sacrificing it only when it blocks "the meaning." Unfortunately, the beat often invites the reader to expect poetry where there is none. Maintaining the beat also seems to induce Nabokov to retain some rather mind-stumbling inversions for which there is not even poetic licence. And in his notes he doth too much his fidelity protest.

Although he attempted to achieve a precise interlinear correspondence, Nabokov, as he admits, was not successful in this. Nevertheless, the division of the lines does serve the purpose, not merely of providing easier reference in the Commentaries, but also of indicating enjambments, strategic shifts, and in general the geography of the stanzas.

There are a number of passages which Nabokov—almost as though it were in spite of his intentions—cannot help rendering as poetry. Here is Stanza XVII of Chapter Three:

> The ache of love chases Tatiana,
> and to the garden she repairs to brood,
> and all at once her moveless eyes she lowers
> and is too indolent farther to step;
> her bosom has risen, her cheeks
> are covered with an instant flame,
> her breath has died upon her lips,
> and there's a singing in her ears, a flashing
> before her eyes. Night comes; the moon
> patrols the distant vault of heaven,
> and in the gloam of trees the nightingale
> intones sonorous chants.
> Tatiana in the darkness does not sleep
> and in low tones talks with her nurse.

As though he were catching himself up short, Nabokov then insists on beginning the dialogue between Tatiana and her nurse: "I can't sleep, nurse: 'tis here so stuffy!" The Russian has no "'tis" and says in the exact word order, "here so stuffy." Why Nabokov should consider this more faithful than "so stuffy here," or even, "it's so stuffy here," and what it is being more faithful to, eludes me.

A good deal of the Commentaries Nabokov devotes to tracing Pushkin's diction and turn of idiom, or rather to finding close parallels

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to it, in the French literature and the French translations of European literature that Pushkin knew. *Onegin* was written between 1823 and 1832. The French speech that attracted Pushkin would probably have sounded slightly archaic to a Parisian of the time. Yet many of the phrases he used (some literal, some not so literal, translations of French idiom) were new to the Russian literary language of his time. Many of his innovations were considered shocking to the purists. Where does the translator into English, working between the years 1954 and 1964, go to find equivalent diction and idiom? To English poetry of the nineteenth or of the eighteenth century? To Rousseau, Parny, Chenier, Chateaubriand and the Pichot who translated Byron into French? Or to the idiom of his own day? Some of Nabokov's seeming archaisms are in fact neologisms, like *hyp* and *chondria* for different aspects of *hypochondria*. In general he tries for a verbal "soup" with an eighteenth century flavor. But where Pushkin's language tends towards lightness, suppleness, flexibility, grace, expressiveness, Nabokov's is often of a somber Latinate heaviness: *juventude, senetude,* etc.

The effect is to displace the poem from the text into the Commentaries which, on the whole, are marvelous: wild, unconstrained, sometimes brilliantly illuminating, often deeply learned, often witty, sometimes irrelevant, austere and objective or absurdly personal, sometimes donnish and pedantic, but fundamentally free, expansive, liberating—much more like Pushkin's *Onegin,* really, than the translated text. By his assiduous tracing of corespondences to Pushkin's diction and idiom he creates the sense of a shared poetic world, in which of course the French translations and French minor poets and romanciers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century figure prominently but which seems to lead back to the classical languages to which all of European literature is so deeply indebted. There are striking parallels, as Nabokov points out, between passages in Pushkin and in Andrew Marvell, whom Pushkin was most unlikely to have read. Nabokov's discussions of European literary conventions, as much as his discussion of idiom, range broadly and play brilliantly into the depths of our common history. He shows us the pastoral landscape of Larino in its true location halfway between Arcadia and the fields which Levin watered with his sweat. His discussions of the literary modes of Byronism, Schillerism, sentimentalism, which in a sense *Onegin* is really about, are full of play and surprises. Nor does he hesitate to set rolling at less than a moment's notice a whole army of vehement idiosyncrasies and personal opinions—many of them outrageous. "Symbolic interpretation" he denounces as a "mere parlor-game" and rejects, while the presumably more serious game of tracking down "the facts" about Pushkin's Negro ancestor (factually elusive, but imaginatively woven out of the threads of non-evidence and mysteriously and delightfully *there*) occupies him for over sixty pages, including bibliography!

After reading Nabokov, the translations by Professors Arndt and

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Fennell seem rather pale. I don't think Arndt's is as bad as Nabokov said it was.[3] Some of it even reads like poetry, although the overall price paid for the rhyme-scheme is undoubtedly high.

If Arndt seems overstrained, Fennell is altogether too casual. The Penguin volume is pleasant, inexpensive and convenient, and I can remember a time when I was a staunch advocate of such bilingual editions. But I do not now believe that anyone who knows Russian at all well will be much helped by a book like this, and for someone who does not know the language well, there are some careless mistakes and a greater number of slurrings-over of meaning, as well as a dearth of footnotes and other aids—all of which seriously compromise its usefulness. The introduction contains the usual insipid banalities about Pushkin's "splendid nanny" and the "inflammatory verse" of his youth.[4]

The Russian landscape into which Pushkin's pale, broody, "literary" Tatiana stared from the window of her manor house and which she imbued with her poetic Arcadian fancies became a haunting and permanent presence in the Russian literature that followed. The autobiography of Konstantin Paustovsky is full of this landscape and of the "matriotic" literature in which its spirit has lived.

Paustovsky is not a great writer, yet he deserves better treatment than he has received in this American translation, which is sentimental rather than lyrical as the original is, and slipshod rather than carefully

[3] Arndt has requested, and, admirably enough, his publishers have agreed to, the withdrawal of the present edition to allow the translator to incorporate some of Nabokov's criticisms.

[4] The past year has seen almost as many new translations into English of *Onegin* as the previous century. Now we have yet another, by the indefatigable Eugene Kayden (Antioch Press, $5.50). In our search for Pushkin, unfortunately, it does not get us far. Kayden has had the good sense to abandon, as I suggested above, the rhyme scheme of the original. But some kind of verbal play, some kind of added footwork, must be put in to take the place of the missing dance of the rhymes. He keeps the fourteen-line iambic-tetrameter stanzas, which means, since English tends to be more terse than Russian, that his verse sounds padded and stuffed. His diction is banal and lusterless and the rhymes he does use are stale, dreary and hackneyed. He makes Tatiana's letter to Onegin sound like a Mack truck going up a steep incline in low gear. And the stanza I have quoted above in Nabokov's rather beautiful and completely accurate rendering, Kayden begins:

> With love and anguish in her heart
> Tatyana in the garden strays.
> Too faint with languor and with grief,
> She stops in weariness, her gaze
> Upon the path, and deeply sighs. . . .

Everything about the volume is pretentious and overblown, including the illustrations, which are attempts (by the Soviet artist N. V. Kuzmin) to imitate the style of Pushkin's marginal drawings and doodlings. Pushkin's drawings had grace, finesse and expressiveness; but they were not intended as literal illustrations to the story. The volume also invokes the names of John F. Kennedy, Robert Frost and Visarion Belinsky, who were, however, no more to blame for its contents than Pushkin himself.

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composed. There is no indication in the text that only three of the five parts published so far appear here. The lyrical and associative qualities of the prose are completely lost, as is Paustovsky's distinguishing precision of language.

Whereas Ehrenburg's memoirs are a string of sharp, intensely dramatic, carefully selected anecdotes about famous men and exotic places, Paustovsky's are composed like a mosaic, far more lyrical than dramatic, precise and thorough in their recall and dealing for the most part with ordinary people in earthy circumstances, though in the latter volumes (not represented in the English translation) some of the famous writers whom Paustovsky knew well do appear, among them Babel, Bunin and Prishvin, without altering the characteristic tone which is halfway between a documentary chronicle and a fairy-tale for grownups.

Rather than *The Story of a Life,* the book should probably be called "A Story About Life," and it supplements Paustovsky's journal dealing with the process of composition which he calls *The Golden Rose,* and which might well have been subtitled "A Story About Art." Whatever his ultimate stature as a writer, his role in the survival of Russian literature has been of incalculable importance. Not only has he had a hand in the republication of Bunin and Babel, Tsvetaeva and Pasternak, writers more or less of his own generation, he has taught, sponsored and protected a number of the more talented young writers, outstandingly among them, Yuri Kazakov. He also helped to rescue, albeit in a pathetically small edition, the unusual anthology, *Pages From Tarusa.*

Tarusa is an historic town south of Moscow on the Oka River. Even before the revolution it was a haven for people connected with all the arts. The redolence of its historic associations from the time of the pre-Muscovite princes of Chernigov who ruled there, through the period of the Mongol yoke and on into modern times, and the somber, typically Russian beauty of the surrounding landscape, made it attractive to artists. Paustovsky, who lived there for years, associates the ambience of the town and its environs with the poetry of Blok, so passionately loved by people of his generation. "The grandsons do not understand," he writes,

> and do not want to understand the poverty wept over in songs, adorned with legends and fairy tales, with the eyes of timid mute children, and with the lowered eyelashes of girls, and agitated by the tales of wanderers and cripples, by the constant feeling of an unbearable mystery living alongside one in the forests, in the lakes, in rotten logs, and in boarded-up peasants' houses, and the always present sense of a miracle. 'I slumber and behind my slumber is a mystery, and in the mystery you sleep, Russia.'

To the grandsons he insists: "You cannot know the new Russia without

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knowing the old." *Pages From Tarusa* is dedicated to this curious interplay between children and grandfathers, old and new, landscape and poetry.

For this reason, the subtitle provided by the American edition, "New Voices in Russian Writing," is misleading: the intention of the Russian editors was to include side by side old *and* new voices. Not only does Paustovsky, who is in his seventies, figure prominently, there is a section of works by and about the tragic Marina Tsvetaeva and the great, too little known and long-suffering Nicholas Zabolotsky who died in Tarusa in 1958. There is the account of an interview with Meyerhold. And in the original, there were many pictures, some of them portraits, others landscapes, and a number of pieces about Tarusa itself, which have been eliminated. The anthology emphasized historical continuity and an ongoing tradition—an emphasis which the American edition has somewhat blunted.

In my opinion the American editor, Andrew Field, is a little too aggressive about the intrinsic literary merits of his volume. True, there are two short stories by Yuri Kazakov that could easily bear comparison with the best that have been written in the last five or ten years anywhere, and there are a handful of excellent poems. On the whole, however, the volume's main interest lies in the literary community whose aspirations it expresses.

I am pleased to say that more attention than is common has been given to the problem of translation. Poetry has been entrusted to poets, and Denise Levertov has done a specially fine job of rendering the nervous feminine passionateness of Marina Tsvetaeva. Not all the results are equally felicitous, and neither the talented Vinokurov nor his "teacher" Zabolotsky quite come off.

Field may tell us too little of Soviet literary politics, but Thomas P. Whitney, editor of *The New Writing in Russia,* tells us too much. About a fourth of the book attempts to explain the vagaries of the literary scene in and around Moscow over the last ten years. Whitney is an old Moscow hand and knows a lot; he also seems to feel deeply the urgency and overall importance of the struggle for a wider range of expressive freedom in Russia. But he has been in far too much of a hurry. He repeats himself and he writes incredibly badly. And yet there are some excellent stories here, by Aksenev, by Nagibin, and above all by Kazakov, who promises to develop into a major talent.

Kazakov's stories are brief, spare and strong. They deal with elemental emotions and have a kind of primitive power and directness, and at the same time a sure sense of people and an artfulness that is reminiscent of Bunin. His people are generally mavericks, oddballs, loners, some perhaps even slightly unsavory. Their milieu is generally out-of-the-way, sometimes even primitive, and he succeeds thus in separating them entirely from the necessity of a socio-moralistic treatment. His style makes us aware of sights, smells, sounds, skin-prickles

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and wind-currents, longings and desires. He dramatises the animality in their humanity and the humanity in their animality, but never does he use his people as instances of a particular morality. At his best he takes us, almost as Chekhov does, to the very source of morality, the human predicament itself.

Beside Kazakov, or Nagibin's fine story, "The Echo," the pieces by Rozov and Tendryakov, however well intended, seem heavy, shrill, too anxious to make even the most obvious point, ultimately tedious and foolish. They may be in the same "camp" but they are not in the same league.[5]

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, author of *Ivan Denisovich,* is a distinguished writer, and the latest work by him, though clearly not his best, has dignity and style and displays some of his characteristic talents, particularly his gift for creating resonant symbolic situations without resorting to indirection or an inflated rhetoric. It is, however, a short story—not even a novella—and certainly not a book. *For the Good of the Cause* is in fact a very slight work. To blow up the type, put it in hard covers and charge a book-like price—I find this unseemly.

Along with the renewed writing of memoirs, there has been, since the death of Stalin, a revival in another Russian literary genre, the traveller's tale. In the nineteenth century these ranged from such classic tales as Pushkin's *Journey to Erzerum* and Goncharov's *Voyage of the Frigate 'Pallada'* to more tendentious works like Dostoevsky's *Winter Notes of Summer Impressions.* Like the latter, many Russian traveller's tales have been concerned only secondarily with an account of the lands visited; they have been mainly intent on using a voyage as an occasion to make some point, critical or affirmative, about their native Russia. Viktor Nekrasov's *Both Sides of the Ocean,* subtitled "A Russian Writer's Travels in Italy and the United States" is one of these.

Nekrasov knows very little about either the United States or Italy, nor does he pretend to know much. He uses the occasion of his trip as a way of talking about literature, art, architecture, the film, the importance of freer exchanges, and the appalling ignorance among Russians of what is actually going on abroad in the arts, or at least what was

[5] Since writing this, I have received the admirable new authology of recent Soviet writing by Patricia Blake and Max Hayward, HALFWAY TO THE MOON (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, $5.95) which contains, among other things, an abridged version of Nekrasov's *On Both Sides of the Ocean,* stories by Kazakov and Aksenov that also appear in Whitney's anthology and an excellent version of Solzhenitsyn's "Matryona's Home." Miss Blake's introduction is concise, dramatic and eloquent. It captures perfectly the pathos of the more-or-less current literary situation in Moscow. Voznesensky, translated by Auden, Kunitz and Wilbur, will strike the sensitive English reader for the first time as a witty, playful, original and important poet. Perhaps too brief, the entire volume has been compiled and translated with a taste and care that makes it a model of its kind.

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until quite recently their ignorance. He writes about the Guggenheim Museum and Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright. He himself was trained as an architect and took his degree the year the Stalinist blight descended on that field, when the plans Corbusier submitted to the competition for the Palace of Soviets were rejected in favor of a baroque wedding cake. After that he fought in the war, and later, in 1954, published an interesting novel (translated into French as *La Ville Natale*) which was one of those that marked the beginning of the thaw. Travelling in Europe and the United States, he speculates on the fate of architecture if Wright and Le Corbusier had been given a free hand to plan cities in the Soviet Union as both of them at one time badly wanted to do.

With regard to the film, he talks not only about *La Dolce Vita,* which Russians had not seen, but also about the unreleased Russian film, *Foreposts of Ilyich,* which Khrushchev, emphasizing the very scenes Nekrasov wrote of, later singled out for violent attack, suggesting at the same time that Nekrasov be read out of the Party. The violence of Khrushchev's attack on the one hand, and the fact that nothing seems to have happened to Nekrasov on the other, indicates the curious stalemate of the current situation in the arts.

A generation younger than Nekrasov, Andrei Voznesensky was also trained as an architect. He is proud of his kinship with Russia's new technological elite, and exults in a new and, for the Soviet Union, relatively difficult kind of poetry. It has verve and an easy freedom of expression, but it also has form and structure, muted assonantal rhymes, tricky meters, sometimes fairly obscure references, and an associative richness. One of his three published volumes is called *Parabola,* and another *The Three-Cornered Pear.* The poets of the generation just gone by that Voznesensky admires most are Pasternak and Lorca. Although he is not beyond writing an occasional pot-boiling political poem, politics seem far removed from his poetry:

> There's a fire
> In the Architectural!
> Those halls!
> Those drawings all
> On fire! like letters of amnesty
> On fire! on fire!
> Like a red-ass gorilla
> Up there on the sleepy facade . . .

At thirty, Voznesensky seems both the best poet of his generation and one of the most popular. He has verve and style. How much he has to say, and how far from the clamp of conformity his courage will carry him remain to be seen.

The translations by Anselm Hollo are extremely uneven. Some have

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little if anything to do with the original. Whether this is due to self-assertiveness on the translator's part or his ignorance of Russian or both I cannot always tell. Sometimes he is quite good:

> . . . Weary
> and young, a chimera
> smoking a Lucky Strike . . .

He can even manage a whole poem, as, for example, the marvelous "Ballad of the Scaffold." On the other hand, he does seem a little quick to drag in the four-letter words when his Russian fails him; he omits important passages, as in "Emigre Restaurant"; he mistranslates, as in "Beatnik's Monologue," "New York Airport by Night," and others; sometimes he even gets overly literal, as in "The Rublyov Highroad"; and sometimes he makes a great fish-sandwich of all these defects, as in "Negro Voice and Bongos." I think he should try harder.

Pasternak was a modern poet, and his idiom was always distinctly and recognizably modern. Late in life, he repudiated the frills and mannerisms of his youth and at the same time began to turn (as Pushkin also had) to the broader and more inclusive simplicity of, as he put it, "a novel in prose." His late poems, too, became simpler, more straightforward, but not less modern. In what is by far the best and most lucid essay on Pasternak I have yet seen, Helen Muchnic has emphasized the essential unity of Pasternak's work.[6] Unfortunately, the existing English translations, including Eugene Kayden's, give one the impression of a different kind of unity—that of an altogether conventional, even rather sentimental man of the middle of the last century, with perhaps a slight dash of incoherence thrown in.

In his introduction Kayden tells us that he has

> shunned the literal and the neutral. I have preserved what is literary and ripe in contemporary speech. I have not aimed to make my versions faithful to schoolroom notions of cramped accuracy, but faithful to Pasternak's thought and sense of life.

Unhappily, Kayden's English, while often ripe enough, seems contemporary only when he stays close to the original—in his translation of Pasternak's letter to him, for example, or lines like:

> Small talk must wound the ears of silence
> Back from the fields of war . . .

When he cares too little about accuracy, he violates also Pasternak's "thought and sense of life":

> . . . in an age of shadows
> Our sublime old malady of thought
> Still calls itself a song . . .

[6] *From Gorky to Pasternak* (Random House, 1961).

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is *not* the same as: "In an age of *such* shadows/ A high malady *alone*/ Calls itself song—" which is what the original says. Nor will "The stifled sweetpea on the vine," do for "Tears of the universe in a pea-pod." To betray the poet's trope is to betray him altogether.

The rhyming is extremely conventional, banal, altogether un-modern and un-Pasternakian. The rhythms and alliterations are Swinburnian. The silliness of:

> In the breeze that asks the branches
> If it's time for birds to sing,
> Like a sparrow wet with raindrops,
> O my lilac bloom, you swing!

or: "My Sister—dear Life—in a downpour at dawn . . ." when the original has neither capital "S" nor capital "L" nor a "dear" nor a "downpour" nor a "dawn—" if that is what is meant by being faithful to the author's "sense of life," then I am on Nabokov's side and altogether in favor of a more servile path. I would suspect, though, that it isn't the path, it's the scout. The few scanty and obscure notes that Kayden provides are to Nabokov's Commentaries as an impenetrable thicket is to the rolling and open sea.

ROGER SALE

Provincial Champions and Grandmasters[1]

PROVINCIALITY HAS ALWAYS IMPLIED a narrowness of mind and temper, and "provincial" is a critical term beloved even by those who cheer-

[1] SOMETIMES A GREAT NOTION, by *Ken Kesey*. Viking. $7.50. ALL WOMEN ARE FATAL, by *Claude Mauriac*. Braziller. $4.95. THE WOMAN IN THE DUNES, by *Kobo Abé*. Knopf. $4.95. THE STONE ANGEL, by *Margaret Laurence*. Knopf. $4.95. NOTHING LIKE THE SUN, by *Anthony Burgess*. Norton. $3.95. THE DEFENSE, by *Vladimir Nabokov*. Putnam. $5.00. THE ITALIAN GIRL, by *Iris Murdoch*. Viking. $4.50. CORRIDORS OF POWER, by *C. P. Snow*. Scribner's. $5.95. THE VALLEY OF BONES, by *Anthony Powell*. Little, Brown. $4.50. JILL, by *Philip Larkin*. St Martin's Press. $4.50. THE ICE SAINTS, by *Frank Tuohy*. Scribner's. $4.50. TO AN EARLY GRAVE, by *Wallace Markfield*. Simon & Schuster. $4.50. A MOTHER'S KISSES, by *Bruce Jay Friedman*. Simon & Schuster. $4.95. HERZOG, by *Saul Bellow*. Viking. $5.75.

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fully admit the world is only a collection of provinces. The eagerness and enthusiasm of the provincial, his ease in assuming the world really is as he sees it, are simple targets for the witty, who recognizes the other kinds of experience which are possible. Readers of novels are proud of their flexibility in the face of the myriad kinds and manners offered them, but they therefore expect their authors to respect this openness. Thus a book that tries to present as novelistic news what is merely journalistic or patently imitative is bound to be depressing. Start, then, with the idea that the provincial novelist at least implicitly considers himself above or beyond what has been happening in literature and the world since he last checked in, and it should be possible to stress a novel's provinciality as a means of showing its limitations without also implying that it is bad or worthless *because* provincial. A writer takes a huge chance when he writes like Robbe-Grillet or treats downtown New York as a place new to fiction, but a chance is all he takes.

Some place must still exist, for instance, where the idea of the Big Story is still attractive, although America is almost certainly not such a place. The Great American Novel is a joke, and so, by all rights, should be Ken Kesey's *Sometimes a Great Notion,* a monstrously long Big Story about a gyppo logging family on the Oregon coast. Hank Stamper is that cliché of television, the invulnerable man discovering his vulnerability, Paul Bunyan living in a world where the strong cannot stand alone. During a strike, Hank calls home his half brother from the intellectual and suicidal east. Hank once seduced Lee's mother, so of course Lee seduces Hank's wife, and to the accompaniment of "Never in all my life . . . have I had it happen like *that*" and "Me neither. I didn't know, Lee . . . so wonderful." To make matters worse Kesey has read lots of novels so the book is filled with sudden and usually arbitrary shifts in point of view, scene, and time. On no account, then, can *Sometimes a Great Notion* be taken with anything like its author's seriousness. Which is a shame, for those with courage enough to read its six hundred odd pages are bound to be impressed by Kesey. The lore is fresh and abundant (and with no trace of Oxford, Mississippi); the details about Oregon, logging, and small union operations are by no means simply informational. Kesey knows why lore is kept alive only by the anachronistic, and he is unsentimental indeed on the relations of a violent pioneering past with a tame and tasteless present. But he is confused, deeply, by his story and by its implications for his main characters. Try as he might, they are embarrassing in their large scale triteness. Because the background is fine, his province seems like a genuine place, but it is finally undistinctive because Kesey is trying to create it with borrowed myths he cannot bring to life.

Simple renunciation of the modes of the past, however, cannot qualify as a guarantee against provinciality. As evidence there is the quarter's worst novel, Claude Mauriac's *All Women Are Fatal,* and it

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is very contemporary in its lack of story and its eagerness to puff the platitudinous:

> The history of a great love is too often that of two pleasures each of which, if it requires the other's participation, remains closed in on itself and without true relation to what isn't its own irreducible perfection. Pleasure is born mechanically, by internal combustion, from the mere functioning of our organs set in motion in a private rotation, often even without external provocation.

Mauriac, secure in his belief that he is not speaking a jargon, proves these utterances via accounts of Marie-Prune, Beatrice, Irene, Genevieve, Ghislaine, Leslie, Christiane, Francine, Julie, Amelinha, Elisabeth, and, as we say, others. Anyone who succeeds in giving sex a bad name should not be condemned merely for being provincial, but that, really, is what is wrong. Mauriac does not know that with a form as easily arrived at and settled into as the French new novel, jargon can be dispelled only by genius.

Other forms do not as sternly require genius and can rely on simple cleverness as a means of escaping narrowness. Kobo Abé's *The Woman in the Dunes,* for instance, uses techniques of science fiction to make an allegory of a young man trapped by a coastal Japanese community in turn trapped because it must spend its time ridding itself of the threat of sand. The plot is ordinary and the allegory simple, but Abé has been clever enough to use the sand not simply as a vehicle. Its power, its movement, its invasion of skin, food, sleep, and sex are all very well rendered into something new. But a better effort, on the whole, at doing what few would try to do, is Margaret Laurence's *The Stone Angel,* told by a prairie woman now ninety and about to be retired to a nursing home by her sixty-five year old son. Much of Hagar Shipley's talk is simply a sentimental effort at rough unsentimentality, but more often than not Mrs. Laurence makes one respond with an absurd, "She's brought it off!"—just as though the reader himself knew what it is like to be ninety. The book is best creating a sense of how long a long lifetime is and how full it is of opportunities to understand and change. Best of all is a scene in which Mrs. Shipley, while fleeing from her son, spends a night in an abandoned house, talking in the dark with a stranger who does not want to admit he's staying away from his wife. It is very bizarre, but one's response to it is not simply that something has been brought off. *The Stone Angel* is Mrs. Laurence's first novel to be published here—she is a Canadian now living in London—and though she seems less than a major talent, she also seems more than able to write a number of fine novels.

Even this much praise eventually may not be enough for Anthony Burgess, who has tried to bring off something really outrageous in *Nothing Like the Sun:* a novel about Shakespeare's love-life. Burgess has always been an adventurous writer and predictably the great mark

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of his Shakespeare is his energy; by insisting on his intellectual and sexual querulousness Burgess manages his impossible task with considerable success. Of course the act of making Southampton open his mouth, of putting the Dark Lady into a bed, of getting the sonnets written and the second best bed explained is bound to cheapen Shakespeare, and so the best one can say for Burgess is that he has been clever enough to imagine a life that fits in all the known details somewhere. About the writing there is more room for quarrel; its Shakespearese is fun as long as one concedes its author's questionable assumption that Shakespeare is rather like Anthony Burgess:

> Still, the true enemy to be bearded was that fine and graceful lordship [Southampton, who has just gigglingly passed WS's sonnets among his friends], silver-masted, silk-caparisoned, cloth-of-gold sails lifted proudly to any breeze of perfidy or wind of court policy, faithless, as incapable of love as of loyalty—and then a great wave of weariness washed over his own poor barque as he saw once more the boy's [Hamnet's] coffin drop into the grave, and he wondered whether, with death always lurking in the alleyways, tainted meat, sour ale, death a very contending twin of life, those great cries about honour and treachery were more than the bawlings of a fretful child in the cradle. Honour is a mere scutcheon. Who hath it? He that died o' Wednesday.
>
> A mere scutcheon? A *mere* scutcheon?

Not flawless surely, and all one can do with writing like this is count the hits and misses, but finally *Nothing Like the Sun* enhances one's admiration and hope for Burgess in ways no mere scutcheon can do.

But at using cleverness to avoid the claustrophobia of provinciality, Vladimir Nabokov was more the master a generation ago than anyone else has proven since. *The Defense* is no *Pale Fire;* it is "only" the life of a grandmaster who becomes convinced his life is a chess game, and its hero, Luzhin, deserves a better novel than he gets. The first half is wonderful, vintage, adoring, unchauvinistic prose—four chapters of childhood spent in total misery until Luzhin discovers his genius for chess, then three more of maturity in which his absorption in the game renders him inoperative for anything else:

> He played in Manchester, where the decrepit champion of England forced a draw after a two-day struggle; in Amsterdam, where he lost the deciding game because he exceeded the time limit and his opponent, with an excited grunt, banged down the stop of Luzhin's clock; in Rome, where Turati triumphantly unleashed his celebrated debut; and in many other cities which for him were all identical—hotel, taxi, a hall in a cafe or club. These cities, these regular rows of blurry lamps marching past and suddenly advancing and encircling a stone horse in a square, were as much a habitual and unnecessary integument as the wooden pieces and the black and

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white board, and he accepted this external life as something inevitable but completely uninteresting.

The sentences are most remarkable for their ability to go anywhere; no one could predict what the next one will have in it. The climax is reached in a game with the brilliant Turati, the inventor of a new opening Luzhin thinks he can counter. But inexplicably Turati offers a conventional opening and the game moves on ordinary lines until an adjournment is forced; Nabokov, thus, hedges here and does so increasingly for the rest of the novel. The account of the game itself is brilliant, the best thing in the book, but afterwards a potentially great novel about a chess player becomes a merely tricksy novel governed by the imagery of chess. Luzhin suffers a breakdown and cannot complete the game, he marries and is kept from playing, and gradually he sees his past repeated in his present until he becomes convinced his life is a chess game played against an unbeatable opponent. It is all brought off with elan, but Nabokov seems not to have realized that he created a character great enough that he could only be ruined in a switch from the life of chess to the chess of life. It is a mistake I am sure Nabokov would not make were he writing the book now (it was first published in 1930). Nonetheless, at its best *The Defense* offers ample testimony to Nabokov's genius, his provinceless freedom, his ability to create worlds unreachable by other routes.

This testament has often been earned by Iris Murdoch in the past, and if she has not been working as long as Nabokov she certainly has done more than anyone else in the last decade to make the English novel an unprovincial fact. She has achieved this by making strong narratives that are not oblivious of the fact that the organized societies of the past that used to make strong narratives possible now no longer exist. But in the years since she has quit her post at Oxford she has apparently insisted on writing a novel a year, and the effort seems to have been a strain. *An Unofficial Rose* and *The Unicorn* have immensely attractive qualities, but Miss Murdoch's prose, never exactly lustrous, has tended to slip from the beautifully offhand to the careless. Now, in *The Italian Girl,* her shortest novel to date, she seems to have come close to the end of the line, or at least the line she has been following since *The Bell.* To say *The Italian Girl* is very much a novel by Iris Murdoch is really to say it is primarily a repeat performance. Edmund Narraway returns home for his mother's funeral and finds his brother Otto, Otto's unhappy wife Isabel and pregnant daughter Flora, Otto's assistant David, and David's sister Elsa. He soon discovers that Otto is sleeping with Elsa and David is or has been sleeping with both Isabel and Flora. Edmund is drawn into the orbit of each and finally into that of the maid, the Italian girl, who has had some presumably lesbian relation with Edmund's mother. The point of all this, as related in some ponderous aphorisms near the end, seems to be that the

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Narraways had to entangle themselves with the fantastic David and Elsa in order to discover life and, having done so, they can let brother and sister go and settle down to the serious tasks of living. The trouble is that Miss Murdoch moves the narrative even faster than usual—there are chases in the wood, fights, a fire, discoveries of people in unlikely places—so that whatever moral is drawn seems only arbitrary; one more turn of the fortune wheel and the story could have an entirely different meaning. The book, then, is almost pathetically lacking in inevitability. The opening scenes are excellent, charged with the unexpected in Miss Murdoch's most magical way, but from then on it is a Marx brothers movie directed by a square. So, unfortunately, *The Italian Girl* is the least satisfying of Miss Murdoch's eight novels and offers worrisome signs that its author may settle for being a one-person province.

But to be worried about future developments is more than one can possibly be with Anthony Powell and C. P. Snow, although it can be said that their latest installments show both rather near the bottom of their form. Of course Powell is the better of the two because he is a real writer, but it becomes increasingly clear that those who praise Powell at Snow's expense are simply addicts to a particular English provincial tone. When *Strangers and Brothers* was still young, it was customary to compare the series with Trollope's parliamentary novels, but, really, the proper measure is Upton Sinclair's Lanny Budd series. The major result of both, certainly, is to convince an ordinary private citizen that he is much more intelligent, sensible, and aware than the men in power. Powell, on the other hand, used to be compared with Proust, and perhaps his proper measure is, say, C. P. Snow? At least his present problem is the very Snow-like one of finding a way to stop. *The Valley of Bones* is very thin indeed, a blown up story about a bank official who would like to become a martinet that is sandwiched around a long section in which we get caught up on Frederica Budd, Buster Foxe, Stringham, Dicky Umfraville, and the number of people with whom Jean Templar went to bed. Its major virtue is a great new Powell name, Flavia Wisebite, but one name cannot justify even a short novel and, for devotees at least, Powell's uninventiveness about the war bodes ill for succeeding volumes. Of course with a writer as imperviously provincial as Powell predictions are hard—he could well write a much later volume as dense as the first three in the series without anyone knowing how or why it happened. But it seems unlikely.

Still the provinciality of the English novel as practiced by the older generation has been common knowledge long enough that it should not deceive us into forgetting two correlative facts: good English novels are being written, and parts of America are just as stiff and insided as Powell's chat and Snow's elephantine grace.

Philip Larkin's *Jill*, though just published here, is twenty years old and really needs no review. But it should be noted that despite Larkin's

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introductory plea that *Jill* be granted "the indulgence traditionally extended to juvenilia," it stands up well as an intelligent book, rather like the still neglected novels of Roy Fuller in its willingness to go about its work without fuss. Similar to it, in this sense at least, is Frank Tuohy's *The Ice Saints,* about a young English girl who goes to Poland to see her sister and tell her nephew he has inherited some money. The money cannot leave England and the boy must return with her, or so she thinks. But she discovers her pathetic brother-in-law, who pursues boring new teaching methods in hopes the Party will give him the Chair of English at the University; her sister, ravaged by the grayness of Polish life, who balks at seeing her husband destroyed by the betrayal of his Polish hopes for his son; her brother-in-law's elegant and un-Partyish rival for the Chair, with whom she has an affair and via whom all her plans for making off with her nephew are made known to the wrong people. The book is effortlessly low-keyed, but thereby the drab horror of Poland and the brutal innocence of the English girl in not seeing its ways and complexities are conveyed without long jaunts into tourism. Tuohy is not a flashy writer but, judging from *The Ice Saints,* his next novels will be much more interesting than those of his elders and presumed betters.

American provinciality, at least in its present forms, is newer than its English counterparts, but not necessarily any less monolithic; there are, as illustrations, three Jewish novels this quarter. One fortunately is a masterpiece, one is the work of an obviously talented man who has still to prove he can write outside the standard terms of the genre, and the third is only ephemeral. It should be possible, therefore, to show how the accents of a particular province can be left strictly as encountered, or used intelligently, or elevated to greatness. Perhaps it is unfair to enter Wallace Markfield and Bruce Jay Friedman in the lists alongside Saul Bellow, but Friedman is still at a point in his career where he can take it, and Markfield deserves no better.

I don't know just who is being cleft in Markfield's roman, *To an Early Grave,* but almost certainly someone does know. The best way to convey the book's qualities is to begin to construct a series of steps, each one of which gets you a little closer to being in on it all. The first is easy, gained by anyone who had a childhood begun between the wars:

> And, trembling a little, Weiner demanded the name of the Phantom's dog.
>
> "Would that be—" Levine pretended to ponder "—ah, Wolf?"
>
> "The Shadow's girl friend," Weiner shot back.
>
> "Heh, heh," laughed Levine. "Marge."
>
> "We're with the Shadow, we'll stay with the Shadow. I am after, I am waiting for the name of the little fellow who drove him around."

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But soon the going gets rougher, in ways difficult to illustrate in short quotations:

> While Ottensteen, swaying, slowly swaying, sang:
> *"Ich bin ah mommeh*
> *Aber wee iz mein kind?"*
> "Hey, man," said Weiner, snapping his fingers and bugging his eyes, "dat, dere's a *mommeh?"*
> "Dat wot ah heerd him say, *neshoma."*
> "Well, den, you answer me a *kashe,* man."
> "Well, den you put it to me, *seeskait."*
> "Well, ef dat dere's a *mommeh . . ."*
> "Dat, dat his contention. . . ."
> "Well, den, where his *kind?"*
> Then, whoosh!

For full-time residents inside the shrine there are many more steps much harder than these to show who God's spies really are. Markfield is a very genial spirit, but it was difficult not to get annoyed with his book; I ended up wanting to ask him questions like, Did Sam Chapman ever bat in more than ninety runs for the Philadelphia Athletics? or, When did Sherlock Holmes stop taking cocaine?

Friedman's *A Mother's Kisses,* as indicated, demands more civilized discussion. *Stern,* it seemed to me, was nothing more than promising because its situation and tone were so totally conventional. It was good because intelligent and unpretentious, but I think his second book shows more encouraging signs. Here mama dominates, primarily her son Joseph, who wants to go to college and ends up at Kansas Land, and though mama is drawn strictly within the confines of the type, any book that ends up at Kansas Land cannot be accused of having been written before, not even by Malamud. Besides, Friedman is trying to whoop up his style, not in itself a good thing, but it shows he is aiming at more than simple jokes and tears:

> People began to stream in through the doors now, the first a vegetable market deliveryman who spoke no English and who had been in "the camps." His face was hollowed and torn, yet he had great mountains of vigorous concert-pianist hair, as though the horrors of Auschwitz had perversely thrown his pompadour into flower, each new Nazi degradation aereating and strengthening his follicles. Liberated, but stripped now of all family and possessions, he delivered phone orders for the vegetable store. "And believe me, he's tickled to death to be doing it, too," said Joseph's mother. "Say hello to Schreiber."
>
> "Hi," said Joseph. She poured him a drink and tipped him a quarter. "What did you do that for?" asked Joseph. "He didn't deliver anything."
>
> "You're telling me how to operate?" she said. "I should stiff that

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> man with what he's been through, and what his eyes have seen that we should never know from it? You want me to commit the greatest crime of the century? You'll take everything away from your mother, but you'll never touch her religion." And in a softer tone she said, "They look for that, sweetheart. I've got to have the respect of my trades-people."

The second sentence here is typical, and its last clause ("each new Nazi . . .") shows Friedman's fondness for that most provincial of faults, self-regarding prose. But the mother's speech is good, if easily turned, and its aim is not, as so often with Markfield's, to be palsy with its reader. The fable of *A Mother's Kisses* is not as controlled as *Stern*'s and its prose, though splendidly flamboyant quite often, is not really in control. But I think it is becoming clearer that Friedman does not intend simply to be another Jewish writer.

But open to almost any page of *Herzog* and it is clear that here the problems that nag a reader of provincial novels have disappeared. Herzog is talking about the man who stole his second wife:

> "And don't forget, Valentine is a great personality too. Modern consciousness has this great need to explode its own postures. It teaches the truth of the creature. It throws shit on all pretensions and fictions. A man like Gersbach can be gay. Innocent. Sadistic. Dancing around. Instinctive. Heartless. Hugging his friends. Feeble-minded. Laughing at jokes. Deep, too. Exclaiming, 'I *love* you!' or 'This I *believe!*' And while moved by these beliefs he can steal you blind. He makes realities no one can understand. A radio-astronomer will sooner understand what's happening in space ten billion light years away than what Gersbach is fabricating in his brains."

Here to be Jewish is at most a slant on life, not life itself. But about life itself *Herzog* has much to do, and Bellow has found a way to read a man's life so it can include a great deal of modern history and still be a life:

> . . . so that his recent misfortunes might be seen as a collective project, himself participating, to destroy his vanity and his pretensions to a personal life so that he might disintegrate and suffer and hate, like so many others, not on anything so distinguished as a cross, but down in the mire of post-Renaissance, post-humanistic, post-Cartesian dissolution, next door to the Void. Everybody was in the act. "History" gave everyone a free ride. The very Himmelsteins, who had never even read a book of metaphysics, were touting the Void as if it were so much salable real estate. . . . But of course he, Herzog, predictably bucking such trends, had characteristically, obstinately, defiantly but without sufficient courage or intelligence, tried to be a *marvelous* Herzog, a Herzog who, perhaps clumsily, tried to live out marvelous qualities vaguely comprehended.

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Perhaps even this is enough to show the rare plane of *Herzog*, one that seeks to elevate speech to discourse and to render discourse as the stuff of a man's life. It is sufficiently lofty to allow for some comparisons between Bellow and his contemporaries.

For some time now Vladimir Nabokov and Iris Murdoch have seemed, along with Bellow, just about the best novelists working in English. Granted that the new Nabokov is really thirty-five years old and that the new Iris Murdoch is weak. Still, at their best these writers have been fascinating for their ability to see the world variously while always insisting that one way of seeing had to be upside down. Miss Murdoch, for instance, has pretty generally insisted that the most selfish are the most forgivable, and Lolita and not Humbert Humbert, after all, is the seducer. Bellow too has known the advantages of the topsy-turvy, but in *Herzog* he has dared to do what neither Nabokov nor Iris Murdoch has ever tried: see the world right side up. It is a risky aim because in so doing one forgoes the ability to earn points for audacity, but Bellow seems to have succeeded. Herzog, in an imaginary letter, shouts to Jimmy Hoffa: "What makes you think realism must be brutal?" He asks the priest who once converted his ex-wife Madeleine: "What is priestly celibacy? A more terrible discipline is to go about and visit women, to see what the modern world has made of carnality!" He tells his mistress, "But I've tried to be a pretty mediocre person, if the truth be told. I've done my job, kept up my end, performed my duty, and waited for the old quid pro quo. What I had coming, naturally, was a sock on the head. I thought I had entered into a secret understanding with life to spare me the worst. A perfectly bourgeois idea." And in his climactic speech: "The real and essential question is one of our employment by other human beings and their employment by us. Without this true employment you never dread death, you cultivate it." All this talk is, granted, abstract and Bellow's ability to render it as genuinely right side up and not simply as pieties depends on his handling of his fable.

In both *Augie March* and *Henderson* Bellow has run down well before the end: Augie, after the trip to Mexico, only sits around and has others tell him who Augie March is; Henderson, save for the great scene with the frogs, barely survives the trip to Africa. Technically Bellow has solved this problem by cheating, for in *Herzog* he does not really begin his story until half way through. Herzog's life is slowly gathered, then he has it snapped in a terrifying courtroom scene, and this propels him from New York to Chicago and enables Bellow to march home to a stunning triumph in the last third of the book. But this solution is not just a technical one and is not really cheating at all. For Augie and Henderson the only way to see right side up is via primitivism, and Bellow seems to have realized or discovered that primitivism was for him more theoretically than actually valid. The answer in *Herzog* is quite different: a novel of ideas and a hero who feels his

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having come to the end of the line so well that the touters of the Void can be sneered at if only because they cannot reckon with Herzog's narcissism and buoyancy.

The result is the first or at least the largest step taken beyond Lawrence and the romanticism that is bought at the terrifying expense of fear and loathing of human kind. Dignity must go and without any accompanying comic reassurance—Herzog must scurry like a rat from his will and need to be kept in shelter, and he must end in silence. But the gains are great: a repeated and convincing insistence that the equation of reality with evil is sentimental and a demonstration that existentialism is only the most recent attempt of the romantic to be respectable and aristocratic. For what Herzog discovers at the bottom of himself is, quite simply, faith: "I willfully misread my contract. I never was the principal, but only on loan to myself. Evidently I continue to believe in God."

To speak of the novel this way is bound to make it seem more simply asserted than it is, but of course Bellow has always been able to create as many characters as he wanted capable of sending a reader reeling inside two pages. All that needs to be said on that score is that *Herzog* is as richly filled as the first half of *Augie March*. More important is Bellow's discovery of a way to shape his major figure: the man who would employ others and be employed by them ends, after his last attempt with his daughter fails miserably, alone and silent, neither triumphant nor beaten but simply and unhelpfully full of faith. For all of Bellow's overwhelming warmth towards Herzog, he does not let the force of his fable shine anything less than full light on his plight.

A book so dazzling is bound to be in danger of being rated too highly too soon, and of course one has reservations: all I have said to now has been the result of taking the book at something close to Bellow's own estimate of it. His strong anti-feminist bias has never been more openly displayed and it would be more disturbing were it not for the grandness with which its largest target, Madeleine, is conceived. Perhaps more telling is the air of unreality that surrounds the novel's good girl, Herzog's mistress Ramona. Given the novel's eventual pace the opening is rather slow and excessively unhurried. A number of Herzog's imaginary letters seem only quirks of Bellow's, and at a number of points the letters are used much too simply as the means of introducing a flashback. Finally, as in most books with designs on the reader, the message tends to be repeated a few times too often. But truly, the more I think about what is wrong the more I am convinced of the novel's essential rightness and claim to the highest praise. Just what the terms of that praise should be it really is too soon to say, so I must be content with this: *Herzog* is the most contemporary and least provincial book to have appeared in a long time. With any luck, we shall never be again as we were.

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NORMAN N. HOLLAND

Recent Drama Criticism: Bathtubs in the Nose

IT IS A MELANCHOLY REFLECTION TO ANYONE who loves the art and science of literary criticism to realize how little literary critics know about emotional responses to literature and how little they seem to care about finding out. How different we are from our scientific confreres who are always poking their noses into the whys and wherefores of things. Some months ago, the *Scientific American* turned up with an article of immediate relevance for literary criticism: a new theory of smelling, smelling being, obviously, a major critical activity. According to the authors, the endings of the olfactory nerves have little hollows in them which are variously shaped, some like a well, others like a bowl, still others like a bathtub. Into these hollows, differently shaped molecules can fit, creating a smell, while molecules not having the appropriate shape cannot. Thus, the bathtub-shaped nerve-endings respond to the bather-shaped molecules of peppermint but not the cylinders of musk. Clearly, we have here a useful paradigm for diagnosing the pathologies of literary criticism.

The trouble with Professor Hoy's book[1] is that the bathtubs in his nose are too large—they accept all kinds of shapes and everything comes out smelling like Plato:

> Comedy, tragedy, and tragicomedy are concerned with deviations from the ideal—any ideal. All the dramatic genres are concerned with mapping the vast territory that stretches between the ideal—of truth, of nobility, of virtue—which man is capable of entertaining, and the reality of performance in the mundane world.

Essentially, Professor Hoy, perhaps because he is so learned and literate a Renaissance scholar, is settling for the universality of the theme of mutability. This is, of course, a Platonic view of literature and Professor Hoy pays due obeisance to that drowsy early-morning conversation at the house of Agathon.

The formula, however, is too large: there is nothing in it to limit the theme to the dramatic experience. One could write a history of the lyric in terms of its changing ways of working out the interaction of the general, permanent, and universal on the one hand with the local, particular, and changeable on the other. Bergson's theory of laughter simply extends this Platonic idea into an evolutionary context: the organic ideal contrasted with the mechanical flaw encrusted

[1] THE HYACINTH ROOM: An Investigation into the Nature of Comedy, Tragedy, & Tragicomedy, by *Cyrus Hoy*. Knopf. $5.95.

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upon it. The formula as stated would cover not only drama, but fiction, indeed, any day's headlines. After all, what Professor Hoy refers to is a property of language itself: any noun *eo ipso* posits a tension between a universal, permanent class of, say, aardvarks and this particular aardvark.

Professor Hoy's subtitle promises us "an investigation into the nature of comedy, tragedy, and tragicomedy," which he duly delivers:

> Tragedy is uncompromising where the contradiction between the ideal and the reality is concerned. Comedy finds its way out of the contradictions which derive from this principal one, by means of sundry adjustments and accommodations which have the effect of reconciling man to his human condition,

and tragicomedy turns out to be tragedy and comedy "forcibly and apparently" linked. Again, Professor Hoy seems to be so indisputably correct as to be uninformative.

Generalizations such as these can take life only from the particular insights that support them, and while Professor Hoy draws on a grand range of dramatic literature to prove his point, I am troubled to read that "self-delusion triumphs in *Ion*"; or that "this whole vast drama" of *Volpone* is built on the single text that fools alone are blessed; or that, in Ionesco's *Killer,* "Life is made to seem absurd by comparison with what is glimpsed in the transcendent vision, even as the vision is made to seem absurd when it is put up against the hard realities of life." I feel an unsatisfying vagueness, as though we were always on the edge of a real insight (or sniff) into the play, but never get it. It is as though the neatness of the general formula controlled the experience of particular works rather than the other way around.

Superficially, Professor Wellwarth[2] also seems to be suffering from distension of the bathtubs:

> At first glance the plays written in French, English, and German since the end of the second World War are entirely dissimilar. It is the purpose of this book to explain the meanings of these plays, set them in their proper place in the history of dramatic literature, and point out their basic similarities. These similarities consist of a common theme (protest) and a common technique (paradox).

Protest, he seems to define as man's rebellion against any superior power, while "paradox" is "a technique that may be described as the selective exaggeration of reality in order to point up the ridiculousness of certain aspects of everyday reality." As with Professor Hoy, such a bathtub will hold everybody from Hesiod to Al Capp.

Yet the bathtubs in Professor Wellwarth's nose are also curiously bent or dented, so that everything comes out smelling like what it is

[2] THE THEATER OF PROTEST AND PARADOX: Developments in the Avant-Garde Drama, by *George E. Wellwarth.* New York University Press. $6.00.

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not: Kops and Kopit, Beckett and Behan, Ghelderode and Gelber all fit into the same bouquet. The trouble is that Professor Wellwarth is writing conventional literary history, and his book suffers the usual limitations thereof. For example, he assumes that propinquity in space and time in and of itself gives literary works a meaningful relationship. Therefore he talks about John Osborne because he is English and post-World War II, but not Brecht or Pirandello. Assuming frameworks of nationality in the manner of the literary historian, he omits such Italian metatheatrists as Buzzati or d'Errico. Like most literary historians, Professor Wellwarth writes as though literary events were caused only by literary events, or, here, that only dramatic events cause dramatic events. We would never know from this book that there is any significance in the fact that the so-called "avant-garde" theatre came into its heyday after Hiroshima and Auschwitz, nor would we guess that such a thing as cinema exists or that Joyce is important for something besides taking on Beckett as secretary.

Further, Professor Wellwarth seems unable to shake that longing for nineteenth-century realism which still so dogs the heels of conventional literary historians. He can announce quite flatly, "The audience's contribution to the theatrical experience is suspension of its disbelief," and therefore Gelber's *Connection* fails because he tinkers with that sacred Coleridgean realism. Yet this playing with the theatrical assumption is the very foundation (or non-foundation) of metatheatre, its Pirandellian heritage, and no sensible criticism of Beckett, Genet, or Ionesco is possible without recognizing that basic and defining fact.

At the same time, he is given to an unusually facile intellectualizing. "Ionesco's point [in *The Chairs*] is the impossibility of communication between human beings." Genet's "paradox is that there is no reality within society." The fall of Pozzo in Act II of *Godot* "symbolizes the illusion inherent in even the greatest apparent power." Wesker's working-class complaints are malapropos, because "long before he was born, Shaw's *Pygmalion* demonstrated that the so-called English class distinctions are pure, meaningless illusion," a statement so ripe in aromatic assumptions as to overpower one's sense of smell.

In short, Professor Wellwarth's olfactory system seems warped by the wish that a play be an intellectual editorial or a representation of events outside itself (in the manner of nineteenth-century realism) or practically anything except the theatrical experience itself, emotional "play," trivial as that might seem. Thus he can say:

> Form in the drama is, after all, not of primary importance. In drama, content is all-important. If the content of the drama is interesting, then the form of the drama, as long as it is not so disorganized as to interfere with comprehension of the plot, is comparatively unimportant. The form of the drama can, however, increase the scope of the content.

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Though I am not sure what that means—if anything—I am sure it represents a failure to recognize that a play is first and foremost an experience which comes in a certain form. Beckett, Professor Wellwarth announces, "is not writing about the activities of two aimless vagrants in *Waiting for Godot*: their aimless meanderings are illustrative of the pointlessness and hopelessness of human existence. Precisely *what* Vladimir and Estragon do is not important at all." But what is a play, except what the characters do on a stage?

One would expect the critics, less passionate than the playwrights, to sniff out theses with greater acumen; the playwrights with their own practice to justify, to be idiosyncratic. Surprisingly, just the opposite is true, as appears from the two collections of Brecht's and Ionesco's writings on the theatre[3] that have now appeared—belatedly, for they have been available in England for some time.

While one would never guess from the two professors that the theatre is supposed to be, not just a moral, intellectual, or historical exercise, but fun, Brecht and Ionesco continually analogize to boxing or tennis or acrobatics. Brecht, in particular, seems obsessed with the idea that audiences should be able to smoke so as to achieve "an attitude of smoking-and-watching." Yet, despite this professional anti-intellectuality, I know of no more intelligent comment on *The Bald Soprano* than Ionesco's own simple phrase, "the tragedy of language," or on *The Chairs* than his flat statement: "The theme of *The Chairs* is the ontological void, or absence." Then there is Brecht's elegant comment on *Galileo*: "He thinks out of self-indulgence." I suspect there is a moral here in the playwrights' success as critics, namely, that there is nothing quite so distorting of one's olfactory and other perceptions as the illusion that one is objective; nothing more leads to frankness than a willingness to accept, as Ionesco does, that "it is quite obvious that you only judge others through your own personality or principles."

If I read Brecht's and Ionesco's criticism through my own self, I find myself harking back to a time when Mr. Nicholas Wahl and I used to while away the hours in the common room of which we were then members by trying to define the intellectual style of the thirties. We ended up simply pointing to typical manifestations: in politics, to the New Deal and the Popular Front; the invention of totalitarianism. In music, swing (notably *The Music Goes Round and Round*) or, slightly more respectably, things like Virgil Thomson's *Testament of Freedom* or the intellectualized folkery of Aaron Copland. Martha Graham. In drama, *Adding Machine, Waiting for Lefty, Winterset,* the whole "Hello, out there" school of playwriting. Shakespeare in modern dress. The style comes clearest in the visual arts: cubism, semi-abstract paintings incorporating numbers and street signs in the manner of Stuart Davis or Charles Demuth; Leger, much of Braque and

[3] NOTES AND COUNTER NOTES, by *Eugène Ionesco*. Grove Press. $5.50. BRECHT ON THEATRE. Edited and translated by *John Willett*. Hill and Wang. $6.50.

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most of Juan Gris. Muscular nudes such as those in WPA murals or the Atlas and Prometheus in Rockefeller Center. The Bauhaus and tubular furniture. The Chrysler Air-Flow, and, in general, the use of fairly large curves to soften right angles, as in the veneered floor-model radios of the period. This being the great era of radio, radio dramas such as those of Arch Oboler or, later, Archibald MacLeish. Radio politics, Roosevelt's or Hitler's. *The March of Time*. In a sense, what sums the era up is the architecture of Radio City, and for all this we adopted the term "modernique." The modernique style seems to characterize a feeling that the traditional issues are correct, but new answers are called for ("new" itself being one of the pluswords of the period: *New Leader,* New Deal, and so on).

The cultural hiatus of World War II left a heritage of mass murder and led into quite a different style. Contrast, say, Stockhausen with Hindemith; the "sick" comedians with the old Jack Benny; elephant jokes as against knock-knocks. Abstract expressionism replaces cubism. Television and computers replace radio as electronic marvels. Politics comes to a concern for non-Western peoples and, in general, the statecraft of the U.N. and Nato—a decline in ideology in favor of the confrontation of specific crises. The atheism of the thirties becomes the zen of the fifties. Where the earlier period is marked by radical beliefs held with passion and conviction (the Spanish Civil War, for example, is a distinctly modernique phenomenon—contrast the Korean), the post-modernique styles seem to express an unwillingness to commit oneself to any belief, but rather a quest for certitude in terms of internal states confronting an overall incomprehensibility of immediate experience. It is the age of H, whether we explicate the letter as the uncontrollable vastness of the bomb or the private sniff of heroin.

Nowhere is this polarization more clear than in metatheatre. Martin Esslin has made abundantly clear its intellectual basis in an external world felt as sensuous, incomprehensible, and uncontrollable—it seems to me the opposite or emotional side of the coin is a retreat into the self. Thus Ionesco writes:

> To discover the fundamental problem common to all mankind, I must ask myself what *my* fundamental problem is, what *my* most ineradicable fear is. I am certain, then, to find the problems and fears of literally everyone.
>
> An avant-garde dramatist . . . is making a real attempt to return to the source. But what source? That of the theatre. A return to an inner ideal of the theatre, for it is in oneself that one discovers the deep and permanent foundations of theatre.

Against such a self, Ionesco poises a non-historical world ("It is the 'historical' which is moribund, and the non-historical which remains alive") or a world with no pretensions toward truth. One way to achieve such an invented world is to find the source of a play in:

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> a mood and not an ideology, an impulse not a program; the cohesive unity that grants formal structure to emotions in their primitive state satisfies an inner need and does not answer the logic of some structural order imposed from without; not submission to some predetermined action, but the exteriorization of one's psychic dynamism.

Another way to achieve the invented world is to translate subjective states into metaphor and then act out the metaphor literally: "The unseen presence of our inner fears can also be materialized. So the author is not only allowed, but recommended to make actors of his props, to bring objects to life, to animate the scenery and give symbols concrete form."

The method is that of madness and Ionesco often sounds schizophrenic. He interviews himself as "ego" and "alter ego" or writes:

> I have never quite succeeded in getting used to existence, whether it be the existence of the world or of other people, or above all of myself. Sometimes it seems to me that the forms of life are suddenly emptied of their contents, reality is unreal, words are nothing but sounds bereft of sense, these houses and this sky are no longer anything but facades concealing nothing, people appear to be moving about automatically and without reason; everything seems to melt into thin air, everything is threatened—myself included—by a silent and imminent collapse into I know not what abyss . . .

Ionesco is describing a crisis of self-object differentiation, an inability to distinguish between subjective states and objective reality, a schizophrenic crisis. And this, too, is post-modernique; not, of course, schizophrenia itself, but the shift in psychiatric interest from the character-neuroses described by Wilhelm Reich in the thirties (modernique in that they represent defenses too passionately held) to schizophrenic and borderline states.

As a metatheatrical playwright, Ionesco presents us with a seemingly nonsensical action onstage. Now, every work of art, every play, as it involves us in itself, blurs the line between the self and the work of art the self confronts. We internalize the impulses depicted objectively by the work; we make them subjectively our own. Then the characters and action and meaning of the play all become ways in which we deal with the conflicts aroused in us by those impulses. But the metatheatrist gives us no action, no relations between the characters, no readily available meaning, just a seemingly nonsensical set of actions. We try to make sense out of them, and thus the metatheatrist makes us take, for our way of dealing with the conflicts created in us by his work, problem-solving intellection. At the same time, in the manner of Pirandello, the metatheatrist calls into question our relationship to the work; he makes us aware that we have blurred ourselves into it. Thus, the metaplay creates in us a deep sense of per-

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sonal uncertainty, uncertainty about our very selves and therefore a doubly radical quest for certainty again—we again strive to solve the riddle of the play. In short, the post-modernique or metatheatrical playwright creates in us a state approximating schizophrenia: affectlessness, concretized metaphors, klang associations, depersonalization, an unclear relation of self to object; then he offers intellection as a self-defeating way of dealing with this miniature psychosis.[4]

Understanding the post-modernique style as such enables us to see Ionesco's rhubarb with Kenneth Tynan (reprinted in this book) as simply a post-modernique writer confronting a modernique critic. More importantly, recognizing the distinction between modernique and post-modernique sensibilities makes it possible to find Brecht in the tradition of metatheatre—halfway. Brecht is post-modernique in his use of "alienation," his calling into question in relation between the audience and the work or, in psychological terms, between self and object. He demands an acting style which is "a barrier to empathy." "Ceremonious. Ritual. Spectator and actor ought not to approach one another but to move apart." There must be "no illusions that the player is identical with the character and the performance with the actual event." "The audience must not be able to think that it has been transported to the scene of the story." "The actor has to discard whatever means he has learnt of getting the audience to identify itself with the characters which he plays."

Brecht is post-modernique, again, in his quest for affectlessness, for being "cool": "The right attitude to any really important phenomenon is a casual (contemptuous) one, because it is the only one which permits complete concentration and real alertness." He calls for "coldness" in his audience, "an attitude of inquiry and criticism," a "verdict," "understanding." He calls his plays "parables" and demands acting that will "enable and encourage the audience to draw abstract conclusions."

But Brecht, to the extent he is a Marxist, is modernique. His plays have both a social concern and a placing of events in historical space and time that does not occur in metatheatre: "True, profound, active application of alienation effects takes it for granted that society considers its condition to be historic and capable of improvement." Yet it is important to realize that Brecht's Marxism is simply a convenient handhold for attitudes intrinsic in his earliest approaches to the drama. He always felt, "The motions of the individual psyche are utterly uninteresting," and he always wanted a "philosophy based . . . solely on the human psyche's outward effects: on people's behaviour." For Brecht, Marxism served as a philosophical peg, a way of hanging up and understanding his concern with people, not as indivi-

[4] The schizophrenic quality of post-modernique metatheatre comes out most explicitly in Adamov's relation in *L'Aveu* of his own breakdown into schizophrenia and metatheatre and his subsequent simultaneous return to health and a modernique social concern in his plays.

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duals but as bodily creatures subject to implacable forces of history and appetite.

Even so, his plays involve a belief, and thus Brecht, though he confuses his audiences in a post-modernique way, offers something more than a riddle as a way of dealing with the confusion. Because he offers belief as a solution to the conflicts of the play, we can take his belief in with all the passion those conflicts arouse in us. Brecht can quite honestly say, "The 'attitude of criticism' which [epic theatre] tries to awaken in its audience cannot be passionate enough for it." Thus, though Brecht decries interest in the self, though Ionesco proclaims it, it is Brecht who accepts the passionate self and Ionesco who calls it into question, who writes plays as affectless as schizophrenia, plays less rich and humane than Brecht's, for Brecht has taken the best of both modernique and post-modernique. And herein, I think, lurks a moral for critics like Professors Hoy, Wellwarth, and Holland: that true objectivity can only grow from subjectivity. To sniff the essence of metatheatre, the wise critic will busy himself only secondarily with the three noses of Roberte II, primarily with his own smelling. This is, of course, a typically post-modernique attitude.

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HAYDEN CARRUTH

Observations on Observing

THE CONTROVERSIALISTS AMONG CRITICS are always particularly endearing when they project your own feelings with more enthusiasm for the fray than you yourself can muster; which has been my experience exactly with Mr. B. H. Haggin. If he had never done anything but show up the tedious fakery of Jacques Barzun in the book about Berlioz and elsewhere, he would be my man. However, he has done a good deal more than that.

Music Observed[1] is a selection of Haggin's reviews from 1929 to the present, the period during which he has been a regular music critic for the *Nation,* the New York *Herald Tribune,* and various other newspapers and magazines, including the one for which I am writing now. The selection has been edited by the author, and although we are not told how much he has done, evidently it was a lot, because in many cases reviews which originally appeared on separate occasions, and even in separate magazines, have been combined into one. Here and there are notes interjected from the present, amplifying or correcting earlier statements. Granted that Haggin in rewriting his reviews may have modified some of them, I see no harm in this: the book presumably represents him as he wishes to appear now, and it makes a smoother, more interesting piece of work to put in the hands of the general reader than the usual miscellany of scrapbook clippings. Those who take a strict historical view may always look up the originals if they wish.

Not that the flavor of week-to-week journalism has been destroyed; quite the contrary. Haggin has been pre-eminently a working critic. Most of his criticisms have been of musical performances rather than of compositions, or at least have taken the occasion of a musical performance to launch attacks against fellow critics. (Some of these, incidentally, have been so devastating that I can't help wondering how Haggin greeted the men who provoked them, as he must often have done, during intermissions at Town Hall and the Metropolitan. People habitually remark on the need for an artist to possess a thick skin, but the critic's need is greater.) Another effect of Haggin's journalism is his brevity; most of his notices comprise no more than a few hundred words, and he gets to his point with a directness that critics writing for the quarterlies seldom attain. But there is a reverse effect too: his contorted syntax. In order to compress difficult statements of critical theory into the space allotted him, Haggin has produced some astonishing sentences; they could be lifted off the page and scored, as

[1] MUSIC OBSERVED, by *B. H. Haggin.* Oxford University Press. $6.50.

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they stand, for an ensemble of percussion and blue jays. A third journalistic effect is an inevitable repetition of claims and charges as Haggin has hammered away week after week at the same enemies. A shade tedious perhaps, but no more than that; and I think Haggin has been wise, everything considered, not to edit out this aspect of his lifework.

What are the charges and who are the enemies? Most of us regard Haggin as the New Critic of music. I see no point in speculating on the extent to which he may have been influenced by the New Critics of literature; chiefly Haggin's attitudes derive from such prior criticism as that of Bernard Shaw, just as the attitudes of the New Critics in literature derive ultimately from some such nineteenth-century source as Arthur Symons' essay on the Symbolistes; in short, the autonomy of art and *explication de texte* were in the air, and it isn't surprising that a man of Haggin's critical fervor should have adapted them to his own uses. For him the esthetic object, the musical object, was all that mattered, the only thing of interest. In a musical performance any device or artifice which is not directed solely toward the discovery and reproduction of the values implicit in the object, is extraneous at best and a falsification at worst; and generally, for Haggin, the worst was what he heard. Thus as far back as the early thirties Haggin placed himself clearly in support of such musicians as Toscanini, Flagstad (whom he first heard in 1934), and Schnabel, as opposed to Stokowski, Lehmann (who nevertheless pleased him at her best), and Horowitz; and it was not only the posturing and theatrical excess of these latter performers that irritated Haggin, but even more their tonal distortions and insensitive playing around with tempi and dynamics. Yet these performers were the more popular, and enjoyed the wider measure of critical support; with the result that one large class of Haggin's enemies was the corps of critics which gave that support, the run-of-the-mill critics of the New York press: Olin Downes, Irving Kolodin, Deems Taylor, Lawrence Gilman, and so on.

The other large class of enemies was found at the opposite end of the field, so to speak, among the scholars; especially among those who called themselves musicologists and whose contention that the musical object can be understood only in relation to its historical environment was of course inimical to everything Haggin believes. He has been particularly delighted when, without claiming scholarship himself, he could nevertheless point out scholarly defects in the work of Ernest Newman, Alfred Einstein, or Paul Henry Lang; and these passages in his reviews are without doubt good fun to read, although they don't prove what Haggin would like them to prove—the errors of scholarship do not invalidate the objectives of scholarship. What is more important is Haggin's insistence that the values intrinsic to Mozart's Divertimento K. 287, for instance, or Verdi's *Te Deum,* can be perfectly understood and appreciated without a knowledge of the circumstances in which they were created; that they are, in short, timeless

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values, and may be understood in terms of timeless esthetic criteria alone. To this the musicologists responded a flat no.

Now it seems to me two general points must be made in connection with Haggin. The first is that his taste, within the narrow repertory available to the music critic who must report the activities of the principal orchestras and opera companies, has prevailed. To the extent that a reformation in public musical awareness has occurred in the past thirty years—a limited but observable extent—Haggin and one or two others are to be thanked. Not that his criticism has enjoyed the popularity of Winthrop Sargeant's, say, or of someone else's that Haggin equally despises; but his insistence on musical values and his dedication to musical intelligence have been attractive to the sensitive elements of the public, and have helped greatly to furnish an atmosphere in which the musical directors of the large orchestras could experiment with changes of repertory. Haggin's taste is by no means dry or restrictive, or even particularly technical. His favorite musician, Toscanini, is praised precisely because he could seize the musical substance of the work in question and articulate it in a more powerful expressive form than could most of his contemporaries. Haggin's own taste appears to favor works which are strong but clear; he contrasts the "impassioned elegance" of music he likes to the "fat-toned, high-powered" excesses of music he does not like. Hence it is predictable that he prefers Beethoven and Schubert to Bruckner and Brahms; but what is not so predictable—or at least what would not have been predictable thirty years ago—is that such a taste should also prefer Berlioz, Wagner, Musorgsky, Debussy, and (sometimes) Mahler. Such a listing reveals the new configurations of musical taste that have evolved quite recently. Among the "moderns" Haggin has qualified praise for only Stravinsky and Copland; all the rest, and especially the composers who profess one or another "system," he consigns, along with musicology, to the inferno of academicism.

The second point is that in distinction to his taste Haggin's convictions, indispensable as they may have been, are extreme and narrow. Not only that, they are unprovable. Against the musicologists he insists upon the integrity of the musical object. He writes: "The great to-do about Ives's having used this or that revolutionary technique years before this or that famous European composer is about something irrelevant and unimportant: the important thing is what music he produced with whatever technique he used." To my mind this simply is not true. The music is important, of course; we must understand it in its own terms if we are to understand it at all, which is to say, we must understand it musically; but isn't the very content of the music in itself historical? Could it have occurred elsewhere, or at another time? I doubt it; and I cannot imagine, even if it were possible, listening to Ives *in vacuo,* so to speak, and getting as much out of the music as I do when I listen with the whole complex of the cultural

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environment (as far as I understand it) in my mind. As for the argument against the popular critics, Haggin himself speaks continually of the expressiveness of music, and who is to say that this expressiveness or that is "correct"? Happily no one can; otherwise neither creation nor performance could continue as acts of the artistic sensibility; they would be mere feats of intellect.

Fundamentally the musical object, upon which Haggin rests his critical theory, is a fiction. It doesn't exist. Often we say that a poem exists as an object in the world because the medium in which it takes form, the language, can be written; yet we all know that the written language is only a stereotyped representation of the living language, and that different readings of the same poem may vary greatly. The poem is not an object, but rather an incalculable number of objects, or instances, existing in the heads of the author and his readers. Haggin has tried to define the musical object; he has spoken of "the continuum of sound moving in time," explaining it as a "plastic medium" in which "the changes of sonority and pace . . . inflect the contour of the melodic line and shape the tonal mass." But again these are not a musical object, they are a definition of a Platonic musical ideal; the instances still exist only in the heads of the auditors. We know that no system of musical notation, certainly not the conventional one, can come anywhere near to fixing the musical creation in a state of objectivity. We may say that Toscanini's reading of a particular score moves in the direction of the composer's markings for tempi and volume, rather than in a contrary direction, as might be the case with a reading by Koussevitsky or Szell; but who can say that all Toscanini's decisions in matters of phrasing or orchestral balance are exactly what the composer had in mind? Indeed he may have "violated" the composer's ideas quite radically; no one can tell. And for that matter, leaving the composer out of it, who can say that Toscanini's reading is even just or reasonable in terms of the work's entire cohesive organization, which may not be discovered for another hundred years? Many factors besides the score affect Toscanini's performance, and two of them are the temperament of the age and the temperament of Toscanini himself; neither of which is an element of the "musical object."

Haggin contradicts himself, as any working critic must. In his recent discussions of contemporary American opera, for example, he has ruled against the critics who believe that American musical comedy is evolving in the direction of a genuine operatic tradition. He criticizes Bernstein's *West Side Story* on the ground that serious action is musically exhibited in the frivolous "language of musical comedy" (which may be perfectly enjoyable, he adds, in its proper place). But what is this talk about "language"? If *West Side Story* is a musical object, why must the critic judge it on the basis of considerations drawn from outside the work? We know what he means, we can distinguish without any difficulty at all between a melody from Tin Pan Alley and an

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operatic theme; perhaps we agree that the fusion of ends and means in *West Side Story* is incomplete and incongruous. But musical comedy *may* be evolving in the direction of high culture, though it has a long way to go, and if a sufficiently gifted composer comes along we *may* find ourselves in the midst of a new operatic tradition. There is nothing to prevent it if, as Haggin says, questions of origin and historical circumstance are "irrelevant." Of course they aren't irrelevant; and if a gifted composer creates a new opera combining elements of serious musical drama with elements from Broadway, we shall still recognize the different components and know where they came from, but their fusion will give us pleasure instead of displeasure; the point is that we could not recognize the fusion, and hence could not experience the pleasure that an artistic fusion brings, if we did not know and acknowledge the extraneous cultural environments from which the fused elements were taken. Whether we like it or not, music has meanings that are not musical. Again whether we like it or not, these extramusical meanings are inextricably present in musical technique.

These are abstruse points, I imagine. At any rate they don't impair the usefulness of Haggin's work. I myself have experienced a number of ways to understand music. One, the least effective, is to listen with the eyes closed, swaying the head in corroboration of the crescendos and rallentandos. A second is to listen while at the same time reading the score. A third is to play the music oneself; and this is the best for it compels one's attention in the strictest way upon the relationships of note and phrase that determine the music's continuity. To a certain extent these three modes conform to the modes of criticism. The newspaper critics write in the euphoria of self-indulgent sensualism. The musicologists write with their ears half-stopped and their attention focused on a score, preferably an old one. Haggin writes with the intentness, immediacy, involvement, and intelligence—forgive the alliteration; these are exact terms—of a musician creating the sound of music.

Notes on Contributors *(cont.)*

has been at work on a book of criticism about the transition to the modern novel, and on a novel of his own.

FREDERIC MORTON, born in Vienna, is the author of the best-selling biography, *The Rothschilds* (1963). His main interest is fiction, and he has published four novels, with a fifth, provisionally entitled *Schatten*, forthcoming from Atheneum.

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GEORGE P. ELLIOTT

Thoughts of a Secret Christian

THIS BOOK[1] CONSISTS OF "THOUGHTS" AND POEMS composed over a number of years, their interest and importance increasing as their author rose from a fortunate young man, son of the prime minister of Sweden, to Secretary General of the United Nations. The best verses were written in the last three years of his life in the form of haiku—seventeen-syllable fragments of poetry. The prose entries, which constitute most of the book, are reflections divorced from the events which occasioned them, and are expressed succinctly and discontinuously—fragments of meditation for which there is no more exact word than thoughts. For those who are disposed to shun fragments rather than to seek them out, the question is: Why read a book of this kind?

One possible reason for reading such a book is that the fragments are in themselves satisfactory. For example, many of the thoughts in Auden's *The Dyer's Hand* are elegantly put and full of wisdom; one reads them for their high, genial wit. Simone Weil's thoughts are more yet: not only are they peculiarly right in shape and meaning but also when put together they point a strange way of looking which obliges the deepest respect. Hammarskjöld's thoughts, however, do not compel the ultimate, surprised assent. "Would the Crucifixion have had any sublimity or meaning if Jesus had seen Himself crowned with the halo of martyrdom? What we have later added was not there for Him. And we must forget all about it if we are to hear His commands." Good. Very good. But thoughts, like lights, are either off or on, and Hammarskjöld's thoughts and verses turn on no lights in me, no new ones, at any rate. Yet I found the book valuable, because he wrote it.

These are fragments of the spiritual autobiography of a man worth knowing. He is not worth knowing for any of the more usual autobiographical reasons. He is, for instance, neither a Boswell marvelously expert at the craft of confession nor an Augustine making an example of his life nor a Saint-Simon with juicy secrets to reveal. On the contrary, Hammarskjöld's style is so severely impersonal that not a name, incident, or thing from his own life appears in the book, and his spiritual story is reduced to essentials.

> Perhaps a great love is never returned. Had it been given warmth and shelter by its counterpart in the Other, perhaps it would have been hindered from ever growing to maturity.
>
> It "gives" us nothing. But in its world of loneliness it leads us up to summits with wide vistas—of insight.

1 MARKINGS, by *Dag Hammarskjöld*. Trans. by *Leif Sjöberg* and *W. H. Auden*, with a Foreword by *W. H. Auden*. Knopf. $4.95.

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If he were a recluse like Thomas à Kempis or Thoreau, his book could not make itself felt very widely on its own; he would be no more than another worthy contemplative. But he was one of the great of the world, like Marcus Aurelius, and his meditations are illuminated by our knowledge of his position. When we know who wrote these sentences, we look at them twice and reflect on him as we would probably not have done had he remained only chairman of the board of governors of the Bank of Sweden.

> While performing the part which is truly ours, how exhausting it is to be obliged to play a role which is not ours: the person you must really be in order to fulfill your task, you must not appear to others to be, in order to be allowed by them to fulfill it. How exhausting—but unavoidable, since mankind has laid down once and for all the organized rules for social behavior.

*

> The most dangerous of all moral dilemmas: when we are obliged to conceal truth in order to help the truth to be victorious. If this should at any time become our duty in the role assigned us by fate, how strait must be our path at all times if we are not to perish.

My God, the cost of being a scrupulous chairman of chairmen!

It is necessary to stress his worldly position because he reports how intensely he struggled to resist the temptations of self. (The temptations of the flesh he seems to have had less difficulty quelling, perhaps too little. It is true that he wrote: "You cannot play with the animal in you without becoming wholly animal." But he also wrote: "A landscape can sing about God, a body about Spirit." Divide and conquer?) Two of the three main themes of the inward story he tells are his acute loneliness and his wariness of vanity. But his sense of duty would not permit him to hide the talents which had been entrusted to him, even though his own ambition and vanity put them in danger. In the credo he wrote for a radio program, he said this of his origins:

> From generations of soldiers and government officials on my father's side I inherited a belief that no life was more satisfactory than one of selfless service to your country—or humanity. This service required a sacrifice of all personal interests, but likewise the courage to stand up unflinchingly for your convictions.
>
> From scholars and clergymen on my mother's side I inherited a belief that, in the very radical sense of the Gospels, all men were equals as children of God, and should be met and treated by us as our masters.

He was worthy of both these austere inheritances. The tension between them produced also that tension between his public and secret selves which gives the book its special force and excitement. Worldly

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success was the certain by-product of the position which duty drove him to occupy. Yet the dragon in his path (a path which he sometimes referred to as the Way of the Cross) was this same success. "You saved him from victory and, after his defeat, showed him kindness out of a *Schadenfreude* you sorely needed to indulge in." How was he to save his soul despite the success which duty and talent made inevitable? How prevent vain ambition from polluting his exalted obligation? "It was when Lucifer first congratulated himself upon his angelic behavior that he became the tool of evil."

The third theme of the story is his striving for that mystical giving-over of self which only could save him, as he believed. To attain this, he holds himself as alert as possible to resist every intrusion of self into those actions which should be done purely for Others only, and he offers as sacrifices the loneliness and extreme self-vigilance which his position necessitates. The climax of this story comes in the entry made on Whitsunday of 1961:

> I don't know Who—or what—put the question. I don't know when it was put. I don't even remember answering. But at some moment I did answer *Yes* to Someone—or Something—and from that hour I was certain that existence is meaningful and that, therefore, my life, in self-surrender, had a goal.
>
> From that moment I have known what it means "not to look back," and "to take no thought for the morrow."

In less than half a year after making this entry, he was killed in a plane crash during the performance of his duties, seeming thereby to attain the sacrificial death he longed for. "The ultimate surrender to the creative act—it is the destiny of some to be brought to the threshold of this in the act of sacrifice rather than the sexual act; and they experience a thunderclap of the same dazzling power."

It is a saint's legend which *Markings* aspires to tell, and I do not believe it. "In our era, the road to holiness necessarily passes through the world of action." I am not convinced. *The* road to holiness? Necessarily? Why in our era only? Not being convinced of the general applicability of the statement, I cannot profitably read it as an insight separate from its maker. I must read it dramatically, as an expression of a man of action who aspired to ascetic purity; and because I think, on the evidence of this book, that he was impure, I take that statement as spiritually arrogant. Only if his thoughts were of the very highest order, could I contemplate them only; but sometimes I detect in them a sleaziness which does not destroy his holiness but which makes it less than saintly and pure.

> Jesus' "lack of moral principles." He sat at meat with publicans and sinners, he consorted with harlots. Did he do this to obtain their votes? Or did he think that, perhaps, he could convert them by such "appeasements"? Or was his humanity rich and deep enough to

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make contact, even in them, with that in human nature which is common to all men, indestructible, and upon which the future has to be built?

There speaks a man with his eye on the future—fine for a Secretary General but dubious for one who would imitate Christ, all or nothing. Like every writer of thoughts, he is ascetic and would be pure. But, because of a special quality to his thoughts, I must regard him as having failed to attain that perfection for which he strove. I regard his thoughts as being expressions of an interesting, valuable, imperfect self; and just because I look at both him and them dramatically, who *I* am becomes involved in what I see in the book in a way and to an extent it does not when I contemplate, say, Pascal's thoughts or Gandhi's person. Being a family man, that is, impurely and beyond extrication mixed up with Others, body, soul, and self, I look with psychology in my eye at this one who aspires and fails to be a saint. "Friend," I think, "there's more to it than you are telling. I admire the sacrificial use to which you put your asceticism and loneliness, although I do not know the impure reasons for their existence, and I admire without reservation the moral rigor with which you perform your high duties and resist the corrosions of success. But, holy though I am not, I presume to doubt the perfection of your holiness. I don't think saints inspect themselves as you do or as much as you do. For at

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certain crucial moments, you have not seen what was actually there in your experience; you have seen an image projected by your own longing and patterned on the great mystics. For example, because you do not remember a moment when you said *Yes* to you do not know what, you cannot know of your own knowledge that there was such a moment; instead, you see in yourself what certain mystics saw in themselves, looking at yourself as you would have us lesser creatures look at you."

All the same, though he was held from spiritual greatness by that gravest of modern ills, self-consciousness—a sickness to which Protestants are especially liable—it is a great pity that he could not have been, in power as well as in position, "the secular pope of the world," for it is likely to be a long long time before the world has for its supreme chairman another man of the calibre of this one, who may not have been saintly as he wished to be but who was surely good. "Perhaps it may be of interest to somebody to learn about a path about which the traveler who was committed to it did not wish to speak while he was alive."

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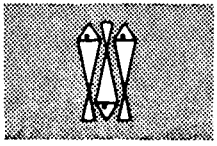

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